



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



Phil 8876.18

HARVARD COLLEGE  
LIBRARY



FROM THE BEQUEST OF

**JAMES WALKER**

(Class of 1814)

*President of Harvard College*

"Preference being given to works in the Intellectual  
and Moral Sciences"









AN

**ESSAY, &c.**





©

AN

ESSAY

SHEWING

THE INTIMATE CONNEXION BETWEEN OUR  
NOTIONS OF

MORAL GOOD AND EVIL,

AND

OUR CONCEPTIONS OF THE FREEDOM OF  
THE DIVINE AND HUMAN WILLS.

BY

ROBERT BLAKEY.

---

"Necessity seems to be the very basis upon which infidelity grounds itself."  
*Bishop Butler's Analogy.*

---

<sup>c</sup> EDINBURGH:  
PRINTED FOR ADAM BLACK, NORTH BRIDGE;  
AND LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN AND GREEN, LONDON.

---

MDCCCXXI.

Phil 8876.18

1875, March 22.  
Walker Bequest.

EDINBURGH :

PRINTED BY A. BALFOUR AND CO., NIDDRY STREET.

34-340  
10.

## PREFACE.

---

It is not without a considerable degree of timidity that I have ventured to publish the following Essay. It would betray something like insincerity were I to say that I did not think it contained something worthy attention, either in matter or in arrangement; but at the same time the dryness and intricacy of the subject are calculated to confine my expectations of praise within very moderate bounds indeed. In these times, abstract questions, and refined speculations, are held but in comparatively little repute. There has not been perhaps, in any period in the literary history of this country, a greater degree of lukewarmness and indifference, among the reading part of the community, than exists, at the present moment, towards such topics and speculations as will be found in the following pages. The tide of public taste and opinion has set strongly in for amusement, and for what is aptly enough termed light reading; and,

in many cases, even philosophy herself has had to adorn her person in more light and airy habiliments, and to assume a more condescending and accessible demeanour, in order that she may maintain her influence, or extend her popularity.

Discussions on human nature are much more intricate than those on mathematics, or those on the sciences, which are generally classified under the head of natural philosophy. Here the mind goes smoothly forward from one step of reasoning to another, without doubt or apprehension of error; but in metaphysics, moral philosophy, and politics, the path of inquiry becomes more uneven and rugged, and the mind is frequently fatigued and bewildered by the consideration of opposite views and conflicting principles. This difference in the two departments of physical and mental inquiry, arises from the very constitution of things. In mathematics, for example, the terms employed in any process of reasoning are always of a fixed and definite nature, and are invariably used in one sense; thus, a hundred stands always for a hundred, a square for a square, and a circle for a circle. But in subjects relating to the mind of man, to his moral constitution, and his political relations, this is not the case. What is the precise nature of

mind itself, what is morally good or bad, and what is politically expedient or inexpedient, give rise to inquiries in which a considerable diversity of opinion will generally be found to exist. These topics are not susceptible of the same strict logical demonstration on which the pure sciences rest. But we are not, on this account, to conclude, as the language of many who have a dislike to studies connected with human nature would seem to imply, that there is no real stability or truth in these disquisitions ; or at least that what little truth can be extracted from the cumbersome load of controversial matter, which ages of dispute have accumulated, possesses no great claim to be considered as really interesting to man. On the contrary, the truth of mental and moral philosophy is founded upon the same firm and immutable basis as the other branches of knowledge, commonly supposed to possess more solidity, because they are generally more attractive. And with respect to the value of speculations on ethical subjects, when properly conducted, there can, I think, be only one opinion, and that a favourable one ; seeing that they are closely and indissolubly connected with doctrines and principles of great moment, and manifest importance to every human being.

I was once an ardent admirer of the doctrine of philosophical necessity, but in the course of time doubts arose in my mind as to its solidity, and more particularly as to its moral and religious influence on the character, when it becomes firmly established in the mind. I uniformly found, that those writers who were the most zealous and successful in sapping the foundations of religion and morality, were precisely those who brought the doctrine of necessary connexion most frequently and prominently under the consideration of their readers; and in conjunction with this circumstance, I almost invariably found that the effects of the doctrine of necessity upon the moral conduct of its advocates were of a very pernicious description,—their principles becoming perverted, and their conduct dissolute and profligate. From these considerations, I was led to look a little more narrowly into my own views on this point; and the following pages are the result of my reflections, which, though they do not by any means embrace an abstract logical refutation of philosophical necessity, yet they have, I think, an evident indirect influence to this end, by bringing our common notions of the freedom of the will, on a variety of subjects, more completely under one general view.

I am aware, it will be said, in reference to the pernicious influence which necessity is found to exercise, that the evil does not arise from the right construction and application of the doctrine, but from its perversion ; the best doctrines, it may be remarked, may be applied to the worst purposes. But this is at best but a miserable apology for the infliction of positive evil. I have looked with some degree of care into those statements and arguments brought forward by eminent necessarians on this branch of their system, that of rebutting the charge of immorality ; and I have always thought these statements and arguments vastly more specious than solid. There are some systems of human nature, which, though not susceptible of a logical refutation, being of such an equivocal character as to appear suspended, as it were, between truth and falsehood, yet do, notwithstanding, exercise as unfriendly an influence over our moral feelings and habits, as if they were positively and decidedly erroneous, and their error capable of a complete demonstration ; and this I conceive, is exactly the case with the doctrine of philosophical necessity. It is a doctrine liable from its very nature to be misconstrued and abused. I do not know a more destructive instrument that can be put into a young



man's hand, on his setting out on the journey of life, than one of those epitomes of the necessarian hypothesis, which are generally drawn up and circulated by the disciples of this system.

With respect to the language of this Essay, I must throw myself on the charitable indulgence of the reader ; and particularly for those few typographical errors which have crept into the work, from my living at a considerable distance from the place of publication. I advance no pretensions to fine classical writing ; but I may be allowed to observe, that I have endeavoured to be as perspicuous as I could, or as the nature of the subject would allow ; being firmly convinced, that the most important qualification which either writing or speaking can possess, is that of being readily understood.

*Morpeth, 3d January 1831.*

# CONTENTS.

---

## CHAPTER I.

	Page
Preliminary Remarks . . . . .	1

## CHAPTER II.

On Liberty and Necessity . . . . .	10
------------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER III.

Illustrations of the connexion between our notions on Morality and Free-will, from a consideration of the laws of nature, of nations, and of individual countries	30
---	----

## CHAPTER IV.

Illustrations of the influence which Free-will has in our moral opinions of right and wrong, from an examination of the public virtues . . . . .	49
--	----

## CHAPTER V.

Influence of the same principle from a consideration of the private virtues . . . . .	66
---	----

## CHAPTER VI.

On Natural and Revealed Religion	Page 86
----------------------------------	------------

## CHAPTER VII.

The same subject continued.—An examination of several eminent writers on the Free-will of the Deity	113
---	-----

## CHAPTER VIII.

On what are termed the Intellectual Virtues, and on the Analogy between the Power of the Will and our Moral and Mental Natures	148
--	-----

## CHAPTER IX.

General Remarks upon the Principles contained in the foregoing chapters	183
---	-----

## CHAPTER X.

A few Theoretical Remarks.—Conclusion.	201
--	-----

# ESSAY, &c.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

---

I SHOULD consider myself guilty, in some degree, of arrogance and presumption, were I to look upon the remarks and opinions contained in this small essay, worthy of constituting any thing like a new view or theory of morals. I wish what I have here said to be looked upon only as hints which may, perhaps, be found not unworthy of the consideration of others who have more learning and talents than what have fallen to my lot to possess. Moral and metaphysical systems have been very numerous, have all been supported with nearly the same degree of evidence, and have all nearly met with the same fate. This consideration ought to

B

teach all those who write on human nature, something like humility, and not to set too high a value upon their own views and principles. But at the same time I may be allowed, I hope, to say, (probably too much in the spirit of all system-builders), that though what I have here advanced may not be worthy of being dignified with the name of a theory, or be supported with more powerful or cogent proofs than other systems furnish, yet the views and principles here given may be found as plausible as some others which have been taken of our moral nature.

It is not to be expected in moral philosophy more than in many other branches of human knowledge, that a complete agreement, a perfect harmony of opinion and sentiment, will be effected amongst those who have made the abstract principles of our nature objects of their study and reflection. The materials are seemingly so numerous and inexhaustible, there are so many principles of action and varieties of feelings, desires, and passions, so many combinations of intellectual and moral attainments, habits, and tastes, that the eye of the speculative moralist cannot trace the interminable ramifications and evanescent shades of differences; and, accordingly, we find, that no

writer on morals has yet been able to reduce all the objects of his investigation to a system, which has met with a general and ready acquiescence. The moral nature of man, like the kaleidoscope, may be said to present, from his ever varying circumstances, an almost never ending series of fresh prospects and new combinations.

But though man's moral nature presents appearances greatly diversified, it is only in its more minute and particular details; for in all its leading principles it is essentially the same. There is a unity of design, an identity of purpose in human nature, which are not more conspicuous than it is beneficial for us always to keep them in view. There is not a single well authenticated fact which can be produced to show, that any one of the general principles of moral rectitude is inverted amongst any class of people, how rude and barbarous soever they may be; and amongst the numerous writers on theoretical morality, the difference in principle will, upon close examination, be found to be extremely trifling. They have brought forth various systems, it is true, and defended them with keen pertinacity and an abundance of learning and genius, but their systems have generally been founded upon verbal, rather than upon natural distinc-

tions. They have been disputing in form, while they have in reality been agreed, and have fancied they were discussing the different general principles of morals, when they were descanting on imperfect analogies, or the constitutional discrepancies of language.

In all the theories of morals which have fallen under my notice, I have found little or no mention made of the influence which our notions of free-will have on our opinions of moral right and wrong. Some writers pass by the doctrine of free-will with a side glance, others never notice it at all; while those writers who have exclusively treated of the doctrine of human freedom, have considered the matter in a metaphysical rather than in a moral light, and have bewildered and lost both themselves and their readers in that labyrinth of darkness and subtilty, *the mechanical influence of motives*. Instead of those writers seizing the general principles of our nature which are in unison with, and illustrate our notions of liberty, and concentrating them, as it were, into one focus, where their force would have been seen and acknowledged; they have invariably mixed up these principles with such abstract and recondite speculations respecting the nature of mind and matter, and the general

powers and constitutions of our intellectual frames, as to prevent, in almost all cases, even philosophical readers from extracting the moral from the metaphysical materials.

The principle which must be kept in view in the following parts of this work, and which it is the main purpose of it to illustrate, is the connexion which seems to exist between our notions of what is fit and becoming in morals, and the *free-will* which we suppose necessary for the accomplishment of duties of a moral kind. In no system of moral philosophy, nor in any scheme or rule of duty, can it be seriously denied, without running into absolute absurdity, that man has the power of doing certain moral actions; and in proportion as these actions are supposed to be directly influenced by the will, he becomes accordingly entitled to a certain portion of praise or blame, approbation or censure. This is the key-stone to every system of morals; the foundation on which every thing connected with men's moral responsibility must rest. Whatever share of applause or blame we attach to a man's character, we always do so in consideration of his possessing the power of performing good, or of refraining from bad actions. "To perform a



morally good action, then, is to fulfil a moral obligation *knowingly* and *willingly* ; and to perform a morally bad action, is to violate a moral obligation *knowingly* and *willingly*."

But it may be required of me here to state what I mean by *free-will*, or *voluntary agency*. I think these terms have a very extended signification, when applied to moral subjects.\* The term *free-will* is confined to the interpretation which Locke put upon it, namely, the power of simply influencing our determinations, either one way or another ; but it does, in my humble opinion, include the power of perceiving what is right or wrong, as well as the power of acting from our own suggestions. A man is not considered to have, in moral subjects at least, any choice ; or, in fact, he is not looked upon as a moral being, if he cannot perceive right from wrong. We say a man acts in a *reasonable* or *becoming* manner, meaning thereby, that he keeps all his passions, appetites, desires, &c. under a proper and due subjection. But it will appear evident to every one, that it is utterly impossible to define such phrases and terms, as *free-will*, *voluntary agency*, and the like, in an unexceptionable manner ; for we are obliged, by the na-

ture of language, to be content with very imperfect definitions of terms of such a general import. I wish the whole of the facts and reasonings contained in this essay, to apply to the *popular sense* in which the terms *free-will* and *voluntary agency* are used ; and no one, I think, but who is captiously inclined, will be at a loss to determine what is the popular meaning to these terms.

The distinction which divines and moralists are usually in the habit of making between natural and moral evil, arises, in my conception, from the power of the will. For example, the floods arise suddenly through the night, and destroy and carry off many of my flocks grazing upon the plains. This event plunges me into great difficulties and distress, and I call it by the term, *natural evil*. Some time after, my cattle are carried away by thieves ; the bad effects are the same upon my worldly circumstances, but my vexation is greater, and I call this event by the term, *moral evil* ; because it is performed by those whom I conceived to be possessed of the power of free choice. It is just in this manner that the distinction between these two kinds of evil is always made. These two lines of Pope's must be conceived as expressive of the same thing,

“What makes all physical or moral ill ?

There deviates nature, and here wanders will.”\*

It will also be found, that the distinction between moral and physical good is made in precisely the same manner. Moral good is that which is done by an agent, who is supposed to possess the power either to perform or not to perform the virtuous action. And in speaking and reasoning on physical good, we here transport ourselves beyond the bounds or jurisdiction of human power or agency, and ascribe the good to the established order of nature, or to the general laws or special interposition of divine providence.

In maintaining the close and intimate connexion which subsists between our notions of moral fitness and propriety, and our opinions of free agency, it is necessary I should observe that this view of morality bears, in its leading principles, a resemblance to the treatise of Archbishop King, “*On the Origin of Evil.*” But although there be a similarity in point of principle, the similarity ends here, for what I have advanced is entirely different from any thing found in King’s work. Besides, I am not

\* Essay on Man.

prepared to go the whole length with the archbishop, even in principle, and maintain that "*we choose things, not because they are good of themselves, but that these things become good because we choose them.*" What I want to show is, that our conceptions of free agency enter largely into all our notions respecting the moral conduct of ourselves and others; but to point out the exact portion of praise or blame which may be attributed to our notions of the liberty of the subject, and that portion which results from the moral duties performed being for our benefit and advantage, is a task which I cannot take upon myself to perform. This I will leave to others. I shall feel happy if I have, in any measure, succeeded in impressing upon the attention of future moral philosophers, the importance of always keeping the freedom of the will in their view. I feel confident, that the more this matter is considered, (with candour and impartiality,) the more important will the doctrine of the freedom of the will appear; and that we will find that a great portion of our praise or blame attached to moral actions, will, in many cases, seem almost entirely resolvable into the principle, that we are supposed to have within ourselves the power either to perform or not to perform them.

## CHAPTER II.

## ON LIBERTY AND NECESSITY.

---

It may be urged against what I have advanced in this work, that I have taken for granted the freedom of the human will; whereas many learned and pious individuals entertain very different opinions on this point. I am fully aware of the fact, and acknowledge the force of the objection. But in framing any system of human nature, something must be granted as a ground-work; and this is particularly the case in morals; for every writer on the subject must do one of two things, he must either take the liberty of the will for granted, and rear his hypothesis accordingly, or he must be a necessarian, and adopt the reasonings and language of that philosophical school. There is no middle

course to steer. Liberty and necessity lie at the very threshold of moral inquiries, and you cannot take a single step in your investigations without involving consequences either for or against the one or the other of these doctrines. The question whether man be a free agent has always been an interesting and puzzling one amongst ethical writers of every age and country. And though some have treated of our moral natures and duties without any direct reference to either theory ; yet they have done so, not from any conviction that the question had lost any of its interesting features, or had been satisfactorily disposed of, but solely from a reluctance to overwhelm themselves and their readers with a controversy which requires so large a portion of abstract and subtle thinking.

Though liberty and necessity are placed at the head of this chapter, it is not my intention to go into the general question on these subjects. They have been so amply discussed by persons of the highest eminence for learning and talents, that nothing now, worth the trouble, can be possibly gleaned from the controversy. The question, though a very important one, is also a very dry one ; and has at the present time become so barren, that no hope can be entertained, that the most pa-

tient and well-conducted inquiry could be successful in turning up new mould. But I think this Essay would be defective without some notice of the matter ; as what I have said may be looked upon as altogether opposed to the necessarian scheme. A few remarks on the subject are, therefore, called for ; but they will be confined more to the *tendency* of the doctrine of necessity, than to any attempt at a refutation of its principles. To aim at the latter course would be altogether fruitless. I consider the doctrine of necessity to be one which can never be argumentatively refuted. This arises from its very nature ; or perhaps I might rather say, from the constitution of the mind itself. The principles of liberty and necessity seem both to spring up from the natural resources of the mind. But there is an important distinction between them, which ought always to be kept in view ; it is this, that the former doctrine is more closely and directly connected with our duties and interests as rational beings, than the latter. Men may despise the doctrine of necessity without the slightest danger, but they cannot trample upon free-will with the same moral impunity.

It has long appeared to me that there is a great difference in their nature between those abstract

and speculative arguments by which the doctrine of necessity is expounded and inferred, and those which are used in favour of free-will, even in its absolute sense. I have never met with a single person, who, when the necessarian scheme was fairly and plainly made known to him, did not immediately draw the common inference, that man could not be an accountable being by this doctrine. On the other hand, I have never met with a single individual who could see any subtle and puzzling objections against the doctrine of liberty. To men of the world the doctrine of necessity seems always startling, paradoxical, and subtle; that of liberty or free-will, plain, simple, and easily to be understood. The latter is on this account entitled to a stronger claim on our regard, as it seems to recommend itself by an aptness and fitness to the ordinary modes of thinking amongst mankind.

In conformity with this view of the matter, it is maintained by some ingenious and candid advocates for the doctrine of necessity, that all the arguments which the friends of liberty can advance in favour of their own views, and against the system of their opponents, are of a *popular cast*, and they ought therefore not to be allowed to stand in competition with the philosophical and abstract



proofs used in support of the necessarian scheme. By the phrase *popular sense*, as used by the writers here alluded to, we must mean those arguments which the generality of men use against the doctrine in question ; those arguments which lie upon the surface of things, which rise up in the mind as soon as the necessarian principles are enunciated and understood, and which are in fact suggested by the simple, the plain, and unsophisticated principles of nature. Now if these be the kind of arguments which are brought against this doctrine, and are designated by the term *popular* ; and if they are objectionable merely because they are universally suggested and employed ; then I do think they ought not to be too lightly esteemed, but, on the contrary, are worthy of our most serious consideration and attention.

The objections which have been urged against popular arguments in the necessarian question, have arisen, I have no doubt, from some analogy which has been imagined between liberty and necessity, and some branches of physical philosophy, in which the scientific principles are in opposition to our common and every-day notions and beliefs. But the slightest glance at the matter will, I think, be sufficient to show that any such analogy must be

ill founded. The annual and diurnal motion of the earth seems contrary to our common notions and experience ; but to set these common notions in opposition to the philosophical principles, would be to show a prejudice and ignorance of a very culpable description, and *for this reason*, that our happiness and welfare, as rational and social beings, would, in many respects, be seriously affected. But, in the case of liberty and necessity, all advantages are found in favour of the popular notions we have of free-will. It can never be shown, that it is pernicious for men to believe, and to act and conduct themselves in all matters, in conformity with that belief, that they have the power of themselves of doing good or evil ; that their happiness and misery in this life are, in a great measure, in their own hands ; and that they are really and truly free and accountable agents. There can be no possible harm in believing all these things ; on the contrary, these notions will be found to be of advantage to man's individual and social condition ; to be in strict unison with the general principles of his nature ; in fact, such a belief will strengthen and invigorate him in all his duties, moral, religious, and civil. But we have yet to learn the *advantages* which flow from the doctrine of necessity ;

from a firm belief that we are mere mechanical beings, and that our boasted free-will, of which we are constantly talking, and which is interwoven with all our ideas and language, is a mere phantom, and a thing to be despised and held in derision; I say, we have yet to learn what are the great and manifest advantages to man, as a rational being, which this doctrine is so admirably fitted to procure. The fact will be found to be, that there is not a single advantage can ever be derived from a doctrine hostile to human freedom. Even the warmest and most acute advocates for necessity have been silent, or nearly so, upon the advantages of the system. They have looked upon the doctrine as a thing to be carried about with us, only to be shown on particular occasions, when we are in company with philosophers, who alone possess the power of understanding us; or as a philosophical plaything, which may innocently beguile a few tedious hours of speculative leisure, or listless inanity. But it has never yet been, nor never can be, looked upon as any thing but a piece of curious speculation; never as involving any thing in the shape of solid utility or rational pleasure. But looking, on the contrary, to the system of free-will, as it is likely to influence the moral condition of

men by way of opinion, there can be no doubt but this doctrine is calculated to exercise a more beneficial influence over our character than that of its opposite. And it is by no means an unimportant branch of practical philosophy, to distinguish and enforce those opinions and principles, which have a direct bearing and extensive application to our condition, our varied wants, and common affairs.

It is by no means one of the least weighty objections against the doctrine of necessity, that when we become acquainted and enamoured with it, we soon learn to transfer our necessarian language, opinions, and principles, to the Deity himself; and talk and think of Him, as a being as unresistingly bound down by a *moral necessity*, as we, his finite and dependent creatures are. The transition from human necessity is easy and natural, to that of the Deity himself. Hence, we are continually told by those who are tinged with the necessarian doctrine, that God *cannot* do this, nor he *cannot* do that; that he *has no power* to act contrary to those principles of his nature with which he has made us only partially acquainted. We are apt to look upon the Almighty, as a being whose actions and movements are regulated by something approaching to the nature of mechanical agency. Such language and

opinions are, at bottom, subversive of all religion, whether natural or revealed. They exercise a cold and unfriendly influence over our religious affections; and in no supposable case, can they prove in the least manner advantageous to genuine religious sentiments and feelings.

Our opinions of right and wrong, and the scale by which we apportion to each individual action what praise or censure is due to it, are so closely and indissolubly interwoven with our moral freedom, that it seems an attempt to violate the constituted order of things, to maintain any such doctrine as that of necessity. Our political relations, our moral duties, our religious rites and ceremonies, and our whole language, seem founded upon liberty of action. As an ingenious author observes, "the custom of language authorizes us in denominating every action as in some degree voluntary, which a volition, foresight, or apprehended motive in a contrary direction, might have prevented taking place." And again he remarks, "that the perfection of the human character consists in approaching as nearly as possible, to the perfectly voluntary state. We ought to be, upon all occasions, prepared to render a reason for our actions. We should remove ourselves to the farthest distance from the state of mere

inanimate machines, acted upon by causes of which they have no understanding.”\*

It is a somewhat difficult matter, to trace the exact portion of moral good or evil which is created by any particular abstract views, or speculative systems of human nature. We are apt, in such investigations, either to prove too much or too little ; either to lessen the dangers or magnify the benefits, to chime in with our preconceived views and purposes. Upon looking carefully at human nature as a whole, we will find that speculative opinions have not so great an influence over the morality of men, as is commonly attributed to them. The moral principles are deeply rooted, they have a wide and extended base ; so that the fleeting and transitory thoughts which speculative curiosity suggests, make but a slight impression upon the more solid parts of the fabric of our nature. Hence it is, that we find the general duties of morality nearly universally practised, by men of very opposite philosophical and religious creeds and opinions. Wherever any great difference or disparity exists between individuals or communities, respecting matters of practical morality, we will find that dif-

\* Godwin's Political Justice, vol. i. p. 69.

ference more justly, in nine cases out of ten, attributable to other causes than to the influence of speculative systems.

But it would certainly be wrong to maintain that speculation has no influence at all upon our notions of moral obligation and propriety. The proof of such an influence is every day, in our intercourse with mankind, forced upon our attention and observation. With respect to the doctrine which is more immediately under our consideration—that of necessity, I think it is, from its very nature, calculated to have but a very limited influence over our conduct; but, at the same time, I do think that, where that influence has been exerted, and can be clearly traced, the moral effects have been of such a character, as to prevent us looking very favourably upon this doctrine. It has often been used for the worst of purposes. The view which the Turks take of the doctrine of predestination, is nothing but the application of the principle of philosophical necessity; and the debasing effects which are observable amongst this people from this cause, cannot be looked upon but with horror and aversion. The wicked and frantic acts of some sects of pretended Christians, which have, at intervals, made their appearance in the world, and who have acted

upon the letter of the doctrine of necessity, at least as far as human nature would allow them, may be also cited as instances of the pernicious influence which necessarian notions create, especially amongst people who are not much in the habit of exercising their minds on other subjects.

Now, I do think, if we look at the contrary system, that of volition or free-will, we will perceive an important distinction between it and its opposite doctrine, and it is this, that no abuses can follow from even the most determined efforts to carry its principles into full operation. If there be an error committed here, it will be found "on virtue's side." There can be no harm done by men setting up a higher standard of morality than what their natures will, in the opinions of others, allow them to regulate their conduct by. Such persons may come far short of their own wishes or pretensions, but the sum of their morality, upon the whole, will be found greater than amongst those who act from the belief that they have no power of themselves to do any thing. And I think we have a striking example of this in the principles and conduct of the Stoics. Notwithstanding what Pope says,

" In lazy apathy let Stoics boast,  
Their virtue fix'd, 'tis fix'd as in a frost,"



they have furnished us with more interesting and lofty examples of self-denial and pure virtue, than are to be found amongst any sect of philosophers in any age or country. What a celebrated French writer says of their system is no extravagant eulogium, but a just and sober tribute to truth and virtue. He says, "Never were any principles more worthy of human nature, and more proper to found the good man, than those of the Stoics; and if I could, for a moment, cease to think that I am not a Christian, I could not possibly avoid ranking the destruction of the sect of Zeno among the misfortunes that have befallen the human race.

"It carried to excess only those things in which there is true greatness, the contempt of pleasure and of pain. It was this sect alone that made citizens; this alone made great men; this alone great emperors.

"While the Stoics looked upon riches, human grandeur, grief, disquietudes, and pleasures, as vanity, they were entirely employed in labouring for the happiness of mankind, and in exercising the duties of society. It seems as if they regarded that sacred spirit which they believed to dwell within them, as a kind of favourable providence, watchful over the human race. Born for society, that it was

their destiny to labour for it ; with so much the less fatigue, as their rewards were all within themselves. Happy by their philosophy alone, it seemed as if only the happiness of others could increase others.”\*

The moral philosophy of this celebrated sect was founded upon the principle, that man had *within himself* the power to make himself virtuous or vicious, happy or miserable. *Their* wisdom was only another term for self-command or self-denial. Hence their apparently somewhat paradoxical maxims, that a wise man is void of all passion, or perturbation of mind ; that pain is no real evil, but that a wise man is happy in the midst of the severest torments ; that a wise man is always the same, and always joyful ; that none but a wise man is free, all others are slaves ; that none but a wise man ought to be esteemed a king, a magistrate, poet, or philosopher ; and that all wise men are great.

The principles of human liberty were carried to the highest by the Stoics, but the fruit of this was only a more extraordinary degree of personal virtue. It is true that they discussed, irrationally,

\* Montesquieu's *l'Esprit de Loix*, Book xxiv.

subjects at variance with their habitual and practical principles of freedom. According to the account of one who is well qualified to give an opinion on this point, they discussed the doctrine of Fate. \* By Fate, the Stoics seem to have understood a series of events appointed by the immutable counsels of God ; or as the law of his providence, by which he governs the world. It is evident by their writings that they meant it in no sense which interferes with the liberty of human actions.”\*

The evidence that the Stoics did not maintain the necessity of human actions, does not rest entirely upon the evidence of Miss Carter, for I will add here a quotation from an essay prefixed to Bishop Cumberland's *Treatise on the Laws of Nature*, on the *Imperfections of Heathen Morality*, in which we find the views the ancients entertained of necessary connexion when applied to moral actions.—“These are the several opinions of the ancient *Fatalists*, which resolved into two ; the one made every thing the necessary effect of the eternal motion and concourse of atoms ; the absurdity of which, as supposing an eternal chain of *effects*, without any original *cause* or *agent* at all, evidently ap-

\* Introduction to Miss Carter's Trans. of Epictetus.

pears ; and which, by inferring the necessity of human actions, and thereby taking away the foundation and distinction of *virtue* and *vice*, and the consequent praise and dispraise due unto them, was rejected by *Epicurus* himself on this very account. The other made no agent in the world but God, who was supposed to be infused, like a soul, through the whole universe, and to act in every thing by an eternal chain of causes, necessarily connected with each other ; and all derived from *God* (who is called *Fate*,) as the original, or supreme, cause of all.

“ This latter, though more plausible than the former, yet so plainly inferred such a fate as made men’s actions *necessary*, (as both *Plotinus* and *Cicero* observe,) whereby the nature of *virtue* and *vice*, of *rewards* and *punishments*, were so wholly destroyed, that it made the notion itself *intolerable*, as *Cicero* calls it ; insomuch that the defenders of it were forced to allow, notwithstanding, (though inconsistently with themselves,) that there was a *power of action*, or *free agency*, in men’s minds ; and durst not affirm, that human actions were *necessary* ; and the opposite party was so averse to it on this account, as to run to the other extreme, and maintain, that the *voluntary motion or exer-*

*tion of the mind was not at all influenced by fate or antecedent causes.* These two opposite tenets, as they were thought, made the famous *Chrysippus*, and the most reasonable and learned of the ancients of all sects, step in as moderators between the two opinions, and come to an agreement on all sides, that, on the one hand, *necessity* was to be excluded from *human actions*, that so the distinction of *virtue* and *vice*, and *rewards* and *punishments*, both of divine and human laws, founded upon them, might be preserved inviolated ; so, on the other hand, *Fate*, even with respect to human actions, (as well as to external events consequent upon them, in which it was absolute and uncontrollable,) was so far to be restrained, as that it was to be allowed that *antecedent causes* were the motives of acting, or influenced the mind to act, though the *principal* and *efficient* cause of action was a natural power and free exertion of the mind itself.

“ Hence, it appears, that there is no real difference betwixt the *Platonical* and *Stoical* philosophy, in the opinion of *Fate*, and the *freedom of human actions* ; and that which hath led men, through mistake, to think that it was the constant and settled doctrine of the *Stoics*, that human actions were

subject to an absolute *fatality* or *necessity*, is their asserting, in general terms, that all things were originally fixed and determined by the laws or decrees of Fate, and are carried on and effected by an immutable connexion and chain of causes ; whereas this *fatality* or *necessity*, with respect to men, was only understood of *external* providential effects, which were appointed consequential to the nature of their actions, presupposed to be free and in their own power. For the most eminent and rigid *Stoics* plainly assert the freedom of human actions, as hath been proved above ; and the *Platonics*, who are known to be the most zealous for the cause of *liberty*, do yet, with the *Stoics*, constantly maintain *Fate*, and a determined order and series of antecedent causes.”

I think it will appear, upon a careful and dispassionate view of necessity, that it is not, by any means, susceptible, even as a matter of abstract reason, of any thing like demonstration ; that its influence on the conduct, when it becomes an object of close attention and interest, is calculated to be of a pernicious tendency ; and that the system in no way harmonizes with our common notions and language respecting our moral natures and duties. The doctrine of free agency, though not suscep-

tible of logical demonstration, is, nevertheless, free from other weighty objections of having any thing dangerous in it, or calculated to be at variance with, or to unhinge our opinions on matters highly important to, our interests as rational and immortal creatures. I am well aware that arguments have been brought forward by some writers, showing that the doctrine of free-will was fraught with insuperable objections in matters of morality and religion ; but I consider all these arguments so far-fetched, so forced and strained, that I cannot help attributing them to an excessive degree of logical and quibbling refinement ; or perhaps as the result of party feeling and excitement rather than of sober and rational deduction.

I should wish it, however, to be kept in view by the reader, that whether the doctrine of philosophical necessity be well or ill-founded, is a matter of little moment in regard to the principles advanced in this essay. They are by no means necessarily connected with the doctrine. The most rigid necessarian will admit that we have *popular notions* of liberty ; that nature, to use his own language, has wisely entrapped us into a belief that we have the power of doing certain things of our own free-will or choice ; and that, though we are virtually beings

chained down to the mechanical influence of motives over which we have not the slightest control, yet we are considered, nominally at least, as possessing certain general conceptions of our own power to make elections. Now, I wish what I have elsewhere to advance to be tried and estimated by our popular notions of liberty. The existence of these notions will not, I apprehend, be seriously denied by any one ; and I feel confident, that the more our notions of moral approbation or disapprobation are considered, with a reference to those notions, the more evident will their influence over our moral opinions of right and wrong appear.



## CHAPTER III.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE DOCTRINE OF FREE-WILL,  
FROM THE LAWS OF NATURE, OF NATIONS, AND OF  
INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES.

---

IT will appear evident, I think, from a slight inquiry into the nature of the rights and obligations which are said to flow from the simple law of nature, as well as those which have been treated of in the writings of those authors who have been most eminent in expounding this law, that our moral notions of political obligation and duty depend upon the exercise of the *will*. When we possess the power of deliberating, we are properly said to be *free*, and the effects which follow from our deliberations become, by this means, the objects of moral approbation and censure. "When," as Judge Blackstone says, "God created man, and endowed him with free-will to conduct himself in all parts of

life, he laid down certain immutable laws of human nature, whereby the *free-will* is in some degree regulated and restrained; and gave him also the faculty of reason to discover the purport of these laws.”\*

In performing any action which the law of nature prohibits us to perform, or to observe any rule which it imperiously enjoins us to observe, it is absolutely necessary, in order to establish moral disapprobation in the one case, or moral approbation in the other, that man should have the power of choosing between good and evil; that he should be considered as the sole and real author of his own actions, and that he should be totally uninfluenced by necessity, persuasion, or compulsion. “But as the principal reason why man is reputed the *author of his own actions*, is because he *voluntarily* undertakes them, we must always suppose in the *will* some degree of *spontaneity*, at least in those actions that fall under the cognizance of a *human tribunal*; for where a man is entirely debarred of *choice*, and what he does is utterly against his consent, there the action is not to be imputed to him, but to the person who imposed such a necessity upon him,

\* Commentaries, vol. i. p. 39.

and to which he, the *immediate agent*, is in spite of himself forced to lend his limbs and assistance.”\*

It is from the entire absence of restraint, which confers upon all human actions the character of moral imputability, that we are led to consider man as their real author, and look upon him as justly chargeable with all the consequences which follow from them. No reason can be given *why* he is thus morally responsible, but that he *knowingly* and willingly performs the action, and that he possesses the power within himself, either of doing it, or not doing it, as he may think fit.

In the formation of governments, and in the rules and duties which these governments prescribe amongst themselves, for their mutual support or advantage, and which are generally denominated the *laws of nations*, the same principle holds good, that *voluntary power* is the only thing which can confer moral responsibility. Whatever theoretical opinions we may form as to the origin of society, or of the nature of the social contract, if we wish to frame to ourselves correct notions of the constitution and object of governments in general, we must assume that the *wills* or *voluntary powers* of the

\* Puffendorf, vol. i. p. 43, with notes by Barbeyrac.

individuals of a nation, have been either *formally* or *tacitly* surrendered into the hands of the sovereign or executive power of a country, and that the one or the other is empowered to act only in consequence of this individual consent, so to speak, having been conferred on either, to enable them to act for the general welfare. "The essence of a people's sovereignty, is the general will."\* The nature of every regular constituted state, seems to partake of the nature of a covenant, either real or implied, between the majority of those who have quitted the state of nature, and formed themselves into a regular body, and those on whom, by common consent, political power is conferred, for the safety and happiness of the whole. Hence that general and comprehensive principle in politics, *that the will of the people is the supreme law*. "After one or more persons are made choice of for the *ruling* of the new state, those who are invested with the supreme authority, engage to take care of the common safety, and the others, at the same time, promise to yield them all faithful obedience ; whereby, also, each particular man submits his *will* to the will and pleasure of the person or persons so chosen, and makes over to

\* Rousseau du Contrat. Sociale, liv. iii.

the same, the power of using and applying all his strength and force, as the good and defence of the *public* shall require. And when once this covenant is duly executed, there is nothing wanting towards the completion of a *perfect* and *regular* government.”\*

“ Nothing but *consent* can form originally collective bodies of men. Nothing but *consent*, therefore, to which men are determined by the sensibility of their natures, by an antecedent law, could have raised an army, or created that force by which it is assumed that all laws, those we call civil, and those we call natural, were alike imposed on mankind.”†

It does not, I apprehend, materially alter the matter, by saying, that the various theories on the origin of governments, and of the existence and nature of the social contract, are little better than idle speculations, and that no such thing as a practical social contract was ever entered into by any people with its rulers. The reason why these theories of society are so frequently appealed to, and are in such general use amongst authors who write on the leading principles of the law of nations, is, that

\* Puffendorf, vol. ii. p. 191.

† Bolingbroke's Philosophical Works, vol. iii. p. 406.

these writers are under the necessity of taking for granted the *principle of individual or collective consent*, before they can unfold their laws, or make the moral obligation of the axioms and rules of legislation manifest to the mind, and cordially acquiesced in. Without this doctrine of social liberty, the writings of persons on general law would be a complete mass of confusion, from which nothing intelligible or useful could be extracted ; for no *reason* could be given for any one single law, nor any obligation felt, where the only principle laid down was pure force or compulsion. The appeals, therefore, which are so frequently made by Puffendorf, Grotius, and such like writers to the *will* or *voluntary* powers either of nations or of individuals, is nothing but the expression of a general law of our nature, which we are bound to recognise and to obey.

The rules and principles which regulate the intercourse and transactions, whether of war or of commerce, between one state and another, are fundamentally the same as those which regulate the transactions between individual and individual. A nation may be considered in the light of a single moral being, and whatever negotiations or treaties it may enter into with other nations, a *free* and

unconstrained exercise of its *will*, is indispensably necessary to stamp these negotiations or treaties with moral validity, to make them binding on the parties ; and to justify, in the eye of reason and justice, any hostile or threatening measures which may arise out of the non-performance of these mutual covenants and agreements. If one nation make war, without any pretext, on another, reduce its strength, and place it in a situation in which it can have no *choice* with respect to the covenants and agreements which may be demanded of it by the invaders, then such treaties do not become valid or binding ; *and why ?* Because the nation has not been at liberty to act ; it has been deprived of that voluntary power which is necessary to constitute moral obligation, whether it respects nations or individuals. Writers on the *laws of nations* have enumerated five conditions which are necessary to render a national covenant or treaty obligatory. *1st*, That the parties have the power to consent. *2d*, That they have consented. *3d*, That they have consented *freely*. *4th*, That the consent be mutual ; and, *5th*, That the execution is possible.\*

It may also be remarked, that the principles by

\* Marten's *Law of Nations*, p. 48.

which we justify our opposition to any established government on account of its despotism or tyranny, are entirely founded upon *voluntary agency*. If the government of a state bring the community, instead of protecting them, into troubles and difficulties; if it produce famine, nakedness, and civil commotion, the contract which had previously existed between the governed and the governors becomes void, for the former have been placed by the latter in exactly the same state as if one private person were to make a violent attack upon the life or property of another. The public and the individual sufferer are placed in a situation in which they have no *choice*, no exercise of their voluntary powers, but resistance or destruction. Violence must therefore be opposed to violence, and force to force. "Subjects, or particular persons, have a right to defend themselves against their prince, when reduced to the utmost extremity by him, and when he deals with them as their perfect enemy."\*

The general principles of all law in civilized countries, are founded upon voluntary agency. The laws enacted for the punishment of the greatest crimes, as well as those enacted for slight misdemeanors, the *will*, the *choice*, the *deliberation*,

\* Puffendorf, vol. ii. p. 229.



of transgressors enters as a necessary ingredient into the various kinds and degrees of prescribed coercion. In murder, which is a crime against the law of nature, and of the foulest description, *malice, direct or implied*, must be proved; the culprit must, from his general conduct, be considered capable of distinguishing right from wrong, and not to have committed the horrid act unintentionally or from mistake. If provocation should have been given by the deceased to the prisoner, if the latter had been put into such a state of excitement and passion by the former, as to be deprived of the free exercise of his *will*, or power of deliberation, then he is no longer considered in the eye of the law as a murderer, but guilty of man-slaughter only, and a milder punishment is inflicted accordingly upon him. Should the provocation have been of such a nature or extent, as might, if not resisted, have put the prisoner's own life in jeopardy, or left him no other *choice* between running the risk of being murdered himself or destroying his assailant, then a verdict of *justifiable homicide* is returned, no crime is imputed, and the person is acquitted.

When an idiot or a madman takes away the life of a fellow-creature, we lament the event, but never think of lavishing our execrations upon him

for the deed he has committed. There is no moral demerit attached to this death any more than there is attached to deaths from earthquakes, pestilences, or any other casualties of nature. The act of violence must have moral agency incorporated in it to call forth our indignation, and to merit its proper chastisement.

In the case of theft or felony, the same principle holds good to the very letter. Where the will is under control or compulsion, no crime, in the eye of the law of England, is committed. Persons who steal from necessity, to prevent actual famine, are not guilty of theft. There are many high legal authorities for this opinion, but I shall merely, as the position may not be admitted by some, mention a few. In a book called Britton, of high authority amongst lawyers, and edited in the reign of Edward the First, it is mentioned in the 10th chapter, that “ those are to be deemed burglars, who feloniously, in time of peace, break into churches or houses, or through walls or doors of our cities, or our boroughs ; with *exception of children under age, and of poor people, who, for hunger, enter to take any sort of victuals of less value than twelve pence ;\** and except idiots, and mad people, and

\* About the value of fifty shillings of our present money.

*others that cannot commit felony.*" In the "*Mirror of Justices*," a work written before the Norman conquest, it is mentioned that sentence of death shall not be carried into execution upon those who are in "*poverty*, in which case you are to distinguish of the poverty of the offender, or of things ; for if poor people, *to avoid famine, take victuals* to sustain their lives, or clothes that they die not of cold (so they perish if they keep not themselves from death,) they are not to be adjudged to death, if it were not in their power to have bought their victuals or clothes ; for as much as they are warranted so to do by the law of nature." GROTIUS says, " that in case of extreme necessity, the pristine rights of using things revives." He further says, " For the opinion has been acknowledged among divines, that, if any one, in such a case of necessity, take from another person what is requisite for the preservation of his life, he does not commit theft."\* Puffendorf says, " We conceive, therefore, that such a person does *not contract the guilt of theft*, who, happening, not through his own fault, to be in extreme want, either of necessary food, or of clothes, to preserve him from the violence of the

\* Grotius, Book ii. chap. ii.

weather, and cannot obtain them from the *voluntary* gift of the rich, either by urgent intreaties, or by offering somewhat equivalent in price, or by engaging to work it out, shall either forcibly or privily relieve himself out of their abundance." "The law chargeth no man with default where the act is *compulsory* and *not voluntary*, and where there is not *consent* and *election* ; and, therefore, if either there be an impossibility for a man to do otherwise, or so great a perturbation of the judgment and reason, as in presumption of man's nature cannot be overcome, such necessity carrieth a privilege in itself. Necessity is of three sorts :—necessity of conservation of life ; necessity of obedience ; and necessity of the act of God, or of a stranger. First, of conservation of life ; *if a man steal viands (victuals) to satisfy his present hunger, this is no felony nor larceny.*"\* "But in every species of injustice, it is very material to examine whether it is committed through a start of passion, which commonly is short lived ; or from deliberate, premeditated malice. For whatever proceeds from a short, sudden fit, is of slighter moment than what proceeds from forethought and preparation."†

\* Lord Bacon. Law Tracts, p. 55.

† Cicero's Offices, Trans. by Guthrie, p. 20.

In cases of libel, it is laid down as a general rule, that a greater latitude is allowed in the use of injurious or libellous language in speaking than in writing. The reason of this is, that in writing, more *deliberation*, and a freer exercise of the *will*, is supposed to take place, than when persons express themselves in the hurried and unreflecting manner which characterises the conversational intercourse of the world at large.

In civil covenants, bargains, or agreements, it is necessary that the parties making or entering into them, should have the power of choice, or a free unconstrained exercise of their will; otherwise, such legal instruments become null and void. "There can be no doubt," says Cicero in his *Offices*, "that a man is not bound by those promises which he makes, either under the influence of fear, or through the seduction of deceit."\* Promises or covenants, made by children, idiots, or madmen, are considered no way binding; and even such as are made by persons under the influence of intoxication, become, in many cases, deprived of their character of moral and legal validity, for want of this necessary qualification—

\* Trans. by Guthrie, p. 23.

the exercise of the will. " That *promises* as well as *contracts* may be valid and obligatory, it is absolutely necessary that there be *the voluntary consent of the parties* ; for every *promise* and *contract* being attended with some *inconvenience* from the necessity it lays us under of doing such or such a thing, which before we were at our liberty to have performed or omitted, there can be no better argument why we should not complain of this subjection, than that we took it upon us, by our own *free-will* when it was in our power to have refused it."\*

All human laws are framed upon general principles, and are, on this account, always considered in some degree imperfect ; for it is impossible for legislators to take into their consideration the precise measure of *voluntary agency* which enters into every crime, and award a proportional degree of punishment accordingly. This imperfection, which may be found in the laws of all nations, does not, however, enter in so great a degree into our moral opinions and judgments, with respect to the conduct of those who in any way infringe upon the laws. What induced him to commit the act ?

\* Puffendorf, vol. i. p. 298.

What provocation had he? What motives led him to this strange behaviour? These are questions asked by us at all times, when the illegal conduct of our fellow-mortals passes in review before us. Every circumstance of aggravation or extenuation is dwelt upon and taken into consideration; we weigh the temptations which lead to crime, in a finer balance than the laws employ; and we form our judgments, as to the portion of demerit, by a nicer moral analysis, and a more refined power of discrimination, than is possible to be brought into operation before human tribunals.

In strict unison with these opinions, I do not know where a finer example can be furnished, to show the manner in which we form and regulate our opinions of merit or demerit of any action, than in a quotation I shall make from one of the most elegant and acute writers which this country has ever produced. It will be seen from the quotation, how anxious we are to find out the *motive* or *intention* of our action, and ascertain the precise degree in which the *will* was concerned in the transaction; and also, how we alter and regulate our moral opinions and judgments, in exact conformity with the portion of *voluntary agency*, which is exhibited in the various steps of this sup-

posed transaction. It may be necessary to remark here, in passing, that the words *intention*, *effecting*, &c., are meant to stand for the *will*, or the *voluntary powers* generally; and this interpretation of the writer's language, in this instance, is not only necessary to make the passage intelligible, but is strictly agreeable to his own moral principles, which may be seen treated of more at large in the work from which this quotation is taken.

“Just now I hear a report, that a human body is found dead in the neighbouring fields, with marks of violence upon it. Here a confused suspicion arises in my mind of murder committed; but my conscience suspends its judgment till the true state of the case be better known. I am not as yet in a condition to perceive those qualities of this event, which ascertain the morality of the action; no more than I can perceive the beauty or deformity of a face while it is veiled, or at too great a distance. A passenger informs me, that a person has been apprehended, who confesses himself the murderer; my moral faculty instantly suggests, that this person has committed a crime worthy of the most severe and exemplary punishment. By and by I learn, from what I think good authority, that my former information is false, for that the man



now dead, had made an unprovoked assault on the other, who was thus driven to the necessity of killing him in self-defence ; my conscience immediately acquits the manslayer. I send a messenger to make more particular inquiry into this affair ; who brings word that the man was accidentally killed, by a fowler shooting at a bird, who, before he fired, had been at all possible pains to discover whether any human creature was in the way ; but that the deceased was in such a situation that he could not be discovered. I regret the accident, but I blame neither party. Afterwards, I learn, that this fowler was a careless fellow, and though he had no bad intention, was not at due pains to observe whether any human creature would be hurt by his firing. I blame his negligence with great severity, but I cannot charge him with guilt so enormous as that of murder. Here my moral faculty passes several different judgments on the *same action* ; and each of them is right, and will be in its turn believed to be right, and trusted to accordingly, as long as the information which gave rise to it is believed to be true. I say *the same action*, not *the same intention* ; a different intention appears in the manslayer from each information ; and it is only the intention and affections that the

moral faculty condemns or approves. To discover the intention wherewith actions are performed, reasoning is often necessary ; but the design of such reasoning is not to sway or inform the conscience, but only to ascertain those circumstances or qualities of an action, from which the intention of the agent may appear. When this becomes manifest, the conscience of mankind immediately and intuitively discloses it to be virtuous, or vicious, or innocent.”\*

Many abstract and practical principles of policy, observed by different European nations, may be attributed to the doctrine of free-will. Nothing seems, at first sight, more arbitrary and unjust, than a principle strictly observed by the English government, namely, the supremacy of the seas, and the right of searching the vessels of neutral nations. To look at the question in its natural aspect, as it were, we would conclude that a principle of this kind was contrary to the plainest suggestions of natural right ; for nature seems to have made the seas to furnish an easy and mutual intercourse between one nation and another ; and that nothing more decidedly wears the appearance of unjust mo-

\* Beattie's Essay on Truth, p. 185.

nopolization, than for any one nation to lay claim to that which appears to have been made for the use and benefit of all. Yet, to maintain this supremacy by England, is considered as a cardinal principle of her policy ; and she has waged many wars for this exclusive right, and must go to war again, whenever she is in danger of losing it, if she consults her true interests and power as an independent nation. The *reason* of this is plain and manifest. England is peculiarly situated, and were she to allow other neighbouring nations to assume maritime superiority, her destruction as a nation would be speedy and inevitable. She has therefore *no choice* between keeping the upper hand, and that too by force when necessary, and losing her power and greatness. She resembles a man whose life is in perpetual danger from those around him, who has no choice, whose will is under constraint, and who is therefore obliged to endeavour to preserve his existence, by such actions of force or stratagem, as would, at other times, and under other circumstances, when his will was not so situated, be considered, and very properly, as cruel and unjustifiable.

## CHAPTER IV.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE INFLUENCE WHICH FREE  
WILL HAS IN OUR MORAL OPINIONS OF RIGHT AND  
WRONG, FROM A CONSIDERATION OF THE PUBLIC  
VIRTUES.

---

A VERY considerable portion of the conversation and discussion respecting the public and private conduct of men, arises from our perpetual efforts to gain a knowledge of their motives to action ; or rather to know the exact share of voluntary power which each individual exhibits in his moral behaviour. If we look narrowly at the public declamations against, or the public eulogies in favour of, any conspicuous character, we will find that nine-tenths of what is said on either side, may be attributed, not so much to the nature of his actions themselves, whether injurious or beneficial, wise or foolish ; but to what were the probable or known motives which led him to action ; what share his *free will* had in

E

the transactions, and how far he is to be considered in the light of a necessary or voluntary agent. The same moral investigation is carried on from persons of celebrity to persons of lesser note ; throughout, in fact, the whole fabric of social life ; and so habituated are we to this judicial inquiry into the share of moral approbation or disapprobation, which we deal out to our fellow-men by this measure, as a standard of voluntary agency, that we pass through long and intricate investigations with inconceivable rapidity, and without, in hundreds of cases, ever being the least conscious of the matter.

Public virtue is of the highest kind. The virtues of patriotism, moral and political courage, and a fervent and disinterested zeal for the moral and social advantage and happiness of mankind, do always receive unqualified commendation from mankind ; and rank in their estimation considerably higher in the scale of merit than virtues of an exclusively private nature. To devote the whole of your time, your talents, your fortune, and your bodily energies to promote the welfare of others ; to be instant in season and out of season when the public welfare is at stake ; to lay aside all private considerations of interest or ambition, and to pursue the public good with steady and unerring aim, neither turning to the

right hand nor to the left ; is a moral endowment of the greatest importance and highest merit. And if we will look at the matter attentively, we will find that it is always supposed by mankind, that persons possessing such public virtue, and who, by this means, receive such high praise and commendation, have the power of the *will* in greater strength and perfection, than persons who fill more subordinate stations in society.

To prefer the good of others to our own private emolument or advantage, and not only to give the former a silent preference, but to be actively engaged in the means of promoting it, does seem, in the eyes of people in general, to excite wonder and amazement as well as praise. The love of private gain, honour, and distinction, is so strong a principle in all mankind, that it appears to every person to be no ordinary labour in the task of moral discipline, to keep the sordid and private passions in due and proper subjection, and not to allow them to exercise an improper influence over our public conduct. Many persons have the knowledge and intellectual endowments to qualify them for public stations, who are, nevertheless, entirely unfit for such elevation, on account of this want of proper moral discipline ; this system of self-denial, prac-

tised over the more prominent and vigorous passions of the selfish kind implanted in our nature.

We admire and praise actions of bravery and heroism, because we see an exemplification of the power the will has in subduing and keeping in proper order and discipline all those passions of the mind and body, which in ordinary cases, and in ordinary persons, exercise an almost unbounded control and authority over both. We suppose, and suppose justly, that such persons as give evidence of great magnanimity, and a contempt of personal danger and hardships, are possessed of a stronger power of the *will*, a greater degree of self-command, than what people in general can exhibit under similar circumstances of trial and danger. And whenever it happens that we perceive, or think we perceive, that this heroism and public disinterestedness does not flow *spontaneously* from the person himself, but have been influenced or created by compulsion, or the fear of danger to himself or friends ; we immediately withdraw a portion of our admiration and praise ; and our sentiments of esteem and veneration seem to ebb and flow, like the waters of the ocean, according to the degree of influence which the will is supposed to exert over the conduct of the individual whose actions have solicited our notice and regard.

A statesman, let us suppose, is zealously and successfully engaged in removing some public grievance, or in conferring some signal benefit upon his countrymen. While we are simply gazing upon the grievance to be removed, or looking by anticipation on the benefit to be obtained, we lavish our encomiums upon him, with no niggardly hand. Let it be hinted to us that in what we see him doing, he has a deep interest in himself; and in a moment our feelings are changed towards him; though we may still think him an object worthy of a considerable portion of our praise. By further inquiry we learn, that not only himself, but a whole host of his friends and dependants, are likely to be greatly benefited by the public labours in which he is engaged. Here our approbation falls another step. Again, we hear, from good authority, that in what he is engaged for the public good, he is not to be considered in the light of a voluntary agent; that what he is now doing is against his own principles and his own express wish and desire; and that he was dragged into the present measures entirely to save his own life and reputation. Now, he appears naked before us; he is considered as a mere tool or instrument in the hands of others, and we strip him of all moral approbation, and think him no more en-



titled to our grateful consideration, than if he were an inanimate object.

The vast majority of mankind view the public actions of men in official stations, through a dazzling and deceptive medium. The former are situated at too great a distance to see all the little springs and motives to actions which have so general and powerful an influence over the exertions of the latter. But we always find, that in proportion as we become acquainted with the secret mode of managing public affairs, and see more clearly the little arts and contrivances which even great men have to use for the accomplishment of national objects of importance, our esteem and admiration become, in a considerable degree, less ardent, for we perceive more of *mechanical skill*, and less of *voluntary agency*, than we were apt to imagine when we looked from a distance at the movements of public characters.

When we read of the heroic conduct of *Brutus*, and of his steady and inflexible resolution to avenge the cause of his country against the cruelties and despotism of *Tarquin*; and, more particularly, when we hear his magnanimous declaration, that he would have ample revenge for that consummate act of villany, the violation of the high minded and vir-

tuous *Lucretia*, our admiration ascends to the highest possible pitch. But I think it will be found, upon reading the account of that deeply interesting part of Brutus's conduct, where he condemns to an ignominious death his two sons, for a conspiracy against him, that our admiration droops a good deal ; we do not so readily perceive the propriety of this step ; we feel a tardiness in giving our praise to this action, and it requires a considerable effort to enter into the feelings and views of the father. The reason, I apprehend, is, that we are apt to suspect that he is not altogether master of his own conduct on this occasion ; we feel a lurking suspicion that something like frenzy, or ostentation, or a momentary impulse of vain glory, had influenced him ; for it is always with great difficulty that we can suppose a person so far removed out of the influence of one of the most powerful and overwhelming impulses implanted in human nature, an impulse that almost in all cases sets the will at defiance, and particularly, as in this case, by a mere piece of abstract reasoning, on the principles of political expediency ; it is difficult, I say, to come to a conclusion, that Brutus was influenced entirely by patriotic principles, when he inflicted such a severe punishment on his sons.

But, be this as it may, certain it is that we are naturally inclined to view, with a good deal of suspicion, any public character who challenges our notice by great and uncommon personal sacrifices for the public good. When we see a man engaged in arduous and difficult enterprises, where personal dangers have to be encountered, if we in the smallest degree suspect that his courage is tainted with rashness or frenzy, or that he is standing on the very brink of insanity, we alter our opinion exceedingly respecting himself and undertakings; and if we have been led, before knowing the true nature of his character, to bestow praises upon him, we immediately withdraw our approbation, on account of his actions not being under the government of his *will*, or as we are apt to term it in loose conversation, because he is not guided by reason and prudence.

Here the fate of *Lucretia*, which has just now been alluded to, furnishes a good illustration of the connexion between voluntary power, and the praise we bestow on the deeds of public characters. Through many hundred years she has been, and very justly, handed down to us as a heroine of chastity, a martyr to conjugal fidelity; and the sole and only claim she has for this honourable distinction,

which has been conferred upon her by the unanimous suffrages of every civilized people since her day, is, that her *will* had not the slightest participation in the deed which was perpetrated upon her. If we were to suppose, for one moment, that in her intercourse with Tarquin she had ever relaxed in one tittle in her virtuous resolution to preserve her honour, her name, instead of being one on which we lavishly bestow our praise and admiration, would have sunk into merited oblivion, or, if it had been remembered, it would only have been remembered to her shame.

There is not, perhaps, to be found, either in ancient or modern times, a more sublime and noble instance of real heroism and greatness of soul, than that exhibited in the conduct of Cornelius de Wit, the well known Dutch admiral. He was most inhumanly assassinated, with his no less renowned brother, by a misguided and infuriated mob. Cornelius was falsely accused of entering into a conspiracy to poison the Prince of Orange. The accusation was greedily received by a highly inflamed and misguided populace. He was called before a court of justice, the judges of which, overawed by the violence and fury of the crowd without, basely consented to condemn him to punish-

ment. "This man," says Hume, "who had bravely served his country in war, and who had been invested with the highest dignities, was delivered into the hands of the executioner, and torn in pieces by the most inhuman torments. Amidst the severe agonies which he endured, he still made protestations of his innocence, and frequently repeated an ode of Horace, which contained sentiments suited to his deplorable condition, and which are thus translated by *Blacklock*.

"The man, whose mind on virtue bent,  
Pursues some greatly good intent,  
With undiverted aim ;  
Serene beholds the angry crowd,  
Nor can their clamours, fierce and loud,  
His stubborn honour tame.

Nor the proud tyrant's fiercest threat,  
Nor storms, that from their dark retreat  
The lawless surges wake ;  
Nor Jove's dread bolt that shakes the pole,  
The firmer purpose of his soul  
With all its power can shake.

Should nature's frame in ruins fall,  
And chaos o'er the sinking ball  
Resume primeval sway ;

His courage chance and fate defies,  
Nor feels the wreck of earth and skies  
Obstruct its destined way."\*

No one can look upon the true greatness of mind, this real heroism of spirit, here presented to our view, but with sentiments of wonder and admiration. Here every thing which is dear to a man on earth, his worldly dignities, his family, his reputation, and his life, were all sacrificed; yet at the moment when death in its most frightful and hideous form, presented itself, he could, with calmness and serenity of soul, give utterance to language and sentiments the most elevated and noble. But how slender would have been the portion of our admiration, with what coldness and unconcern would we have beheld the grandeur of his magnanimous spirit, even at the moment of its being disengaged by the ruthless hand of the assassin from its tenement of clay, if we had thought he was not absolutely master of his own actions; or that, by a kind of compulsion, or preconcerted arrangements, he had been led to make this display of his heroic firmness of virtuous principle, to excite the sympathy, or call forth the applause of posterity. We would have considered he had played

\* Hume's History of England, vol. vii. p. 362.

a trick upon us, and would have listened to the account of his treatment and sufferings with comparative apathy and indifference.

But I would not by any means wish it to be understood, that there was the slightest circumstance in this warrior's life, or melancholy and tragic end, which could give countenance to such an imputation as is here made, merely for the sake of the argument; for he was really a brave and noble character, and one who calls forth our highest praise and admiration. The words of the poet may be truly applied to him :—

“ By pleasure unsubdued, unbroke by pain,  
He shines, in the Omnipotence he trusts ;  
All-bearing, all-attempting, till he falls,  
And when he falls, writes vici on his shield.”\*

Nothing appears to us an object of greater admiration and esteem, than a brave and disinterested warrior, when he is called forth to fight for the honour or liberty of his country ; when perhaps the welfare, happiness, nay, the lives of millions may be depending upon the issue ; we look with wonder at his self-command, to his indifference to danger, in this fierce conflict of destructive passions ;

\* Young's Night Thoughts.

where an ordinary man would be almost bereft of reason, and lose every thing like self-possession. All those passions which exercise an almost despotic authority over the *will*, in common men, and on common occasions, are all subjected in his bosom to proper obedience and discipline; and it is this self-command, which principally calls forth our admiration. Should he not be able to uphold the supremacy of his *will* or self-possession, but give way to some passion or other, such as fear, rashness, &c., then no previous knowledge or success in warlike affairs, will screen him from a considerable portion of our indignation and contempt.

There is an anecdote told of a Polish General, which pointedly shows how much of our admiration of military prowess is to be attributed to the influence which the *will* is supposed to exercise over all brave heroes in battle. He had for some time past lost both his hearing and his sight; but he could not be prevailed upon to relinquish the habits and dangers of the camp; and he always accompanied the army, under the superintendence of a proper guide, an officer who was a near relative. The Poles and Russians were at war, and the hostile armies were encamped within gun-shot of each other, but separated by a small river. By day-



break, our Polish General wandered unperceived by his guide, along the front of the army, and close to the river's edge, with his pipe in his mouth. The Russians seeing him to be an officer of rank, and assuming such airs of indifference and *non-chalance*, sent a few of their best marksmen to see if they could plant a shot in the general's uniform. They tried for some time, and the shot plied like hailstones round the old veteran, while he, in return, showed the most complete carelessness of life, by twirling his cane on his finger, and putting on the most indifferent airs imaginable. But he had the good fortune to escape unhurt, and when he was stammering back the Russians gave him three cheers for his bravery. It happened that an armistice was opened by the two contending armies, and the commander of the Poles invited the Russian general and his staff to his camp. The latter, perhaps by way of compliment, were very liberal in their praises on the courage and bravery of the Poles, and instanced the contempt of personal danger evinced by one of their officers that morning. Some of the Polish camp, who had heard of the circumstance alluded to, could not contain themselves from laughing outright; and the Russians could not conceal their chagrin, when they were

told, that the person on whom they had bestowed such praises for his magnanimity and contempt of danger, and whom they had endeavoured so industriously to remove from this world, was both blind and deaf.

Dr. Smith very justly observes that “The degree of the self-approbation with which every man, upon such occasions, surveys his own conduct, is higher or lower, exactly in proportion to the degree of *self-command* which is necessary in order to obtain the self-approbation. Where little self-command is necessary, little self-approbation is due. The man who has only scratched his finger, cannot much applaud himself, though he should immediately appear to have forgot this paltry misfortune. The man who has lost his leg by a cannon-shot, and who the moment after speaks and acts with his usual coolness and tranquillity, as he exerts a much higher degree of *self-command*, so he naturally feels a much higher degree of self-approbation.”\*

What a noble, disinterested, and truly virtuous public character does Cincinnatus appear to us, when the deputies of the Roman senate waited upon him to invest him with the office of consul, and clothe him in the purple robes of that high office,

\* Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments, vol. i. p. 327.

they found him peaceably ploughing his field, and attending to his domestic concerns. Instead of manifesting, by sudden or extravagant expressions of joy, what might be looked upon as a natural degree of pride, in being elected to such a high situation, he accepted the offer with unassuming diffidence and modesty ; and calmly remarked to his wife, when about to leave his home, that their little farm would have to remain untilled until his return. Having succeeded by his steadiness, justice, and impartiality, in restoring peace and harmony amongst the jarring factions and interests of Rome, and in securing the affections of all the citizens, he laid down his public authority, contrary to the expressed wishes of the state, and returned to his peaceable and humble mansion, and way of life. Nothing can be more truly noble than such conduct as this. We admire the man who could lay down power, riches, and worldly distinctions of his own accord, things which men in general pursue with such ardour, and relinquish frequently only with the loss of life itself. We are led by this conduct to suppose a high degree of self-command, which could keep in subjection passions of a strong and overwhelming nature. This act of *volition* is the constituent element in our admiration. Any thing like *compulsion* or *necessity* would prove entirely

destructive of the honour and praise we bestow upon such a character.

How high is our admiration of the man who becomes a martyr for the good of his country, or to testify the truth of his religion. We are surprised at his firmness and composure at the sight of the instruments of torment and of death ; and marvel how he is able to subdue the conflicting passions which we suppose must agitate his bosom when, for instance, he casts the last look on his wife and children. But how slight would our sympathy be for his sufferings, and how slender a portion of praise would we bestow upon him, were we satisfied that there was no great self-denial exercised by him, or that the power of volition was but feebly exerted. We would view his fate with little or no concern.

In all these instances which have been mentioned respecting the public virtues, we may see the power the will has in regulating our opinions and expressions in moral virtue. Let us suppose in all, or any of the cases, cited, that the freedom of the will, or the power of volition, were taken away, and what would then remain to be an object of praise to the individuals? What would then be left which would entitle us to use the epithets, *moral obligation*, *fitness*, and *propriety*?

## CHAPTER V.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE FOREGOING PRINCIPLES,  
FROM AN EXAMINATION OF THE PRIVATE VIR-  
TUES.

---

VIRTUE is frequently considered by moral writers, or rather defined by them to be—a proper balancing of the affections and passions ; and if we consider for a moment the real constitution of our moral natures, this will not appear a very improper or defective definition. Man is a being possessed of various moral powers, affections, and passions, suited to the various ends and objects in his progressive state. These powers, affections, and passions are developed in a regular and systematic order, so as to correspond with his years, his wants, and the other physical and intellectual principles of his constitution. But as our faculties are narrow and circumscribed, and our passions apt to lead us into errors in practice, by holding out prospects of pre-

sent advantage, and by deterring us from our duty by present pain and inconvenience ; it were necessary, therefore, that there should be a counterbalancing power, to direct and guide us ; and this power is the *will*. Our passions become the objects on which our *wills* are exercised ; they are the rude and unshapen materials of all that is virtuous or vicious in man. To regulate and guide our passions is the path nature has pointed out to us to enlarge our knowledge, to remedy our misfortunes, to correct our errors, and to constitute that just harmony in the inward man which is the real essence and perfection of virtue. The end and object of all good moral education is not to exterminate the passions and affections of our nature, but to subdue, guide, and regulate them, and to increase by exercise the power of *free will*. By this means we acquire that power of inward reflection, that self-command, and that moderation, in all our tempers and desires, which go to establish that dignified consistency of character, which is always an object of admiration and esteem.

“ Passions, like elements, though born to fight,  
Yet, mix'd and soften'd, in his work unite :  
These 'tis enough to temper and employ ;  
But what composes man, can man destroy ?

Suffice that *reason* keeps to nature's road,  
 Subject, compound them, follow her and God.  
 Love, hope, and joy, fair pleasure's smiling train ;  
 Hate, fear, and grief, the family of pain ;  
 These mix'd with art, and to due bounds confin'd,  
 Make and maintain the balance of the mind :  
 The lights and shades, whose well accorded strife  
 Gives all the strength and colour of our life."\*

There is scarcely any moral quality more highly extolled, notwithstanding what Swift says about its being an alderman-like virtue, than that of prudence or discretion. A prudent or discreet man is one who has all his passions and feelings, desires and appetites, under due subjection to his *will* or *reason*. He is not taken by surprise ; he exercises due caution in all matters affecting his interests ; and this *moral* government of himself gives him the vantage-ground over those who give the reins to their passions and inclinations.

Temperance is another virtue of high value. As its very name imports, it arises from a proper regulation of the passions, particularly the bodily ones. Of so great an importance is this virtue to individuals, and even to the community at large, that all other virtues and intellectual endowments are

\* Pope's Essay on Man, Epis. 2.

of little avail where temperance is neglected. It is properly called a cardinal virtue ; and it may be considered as the corner-stone of a man's usefulness and reputation in the world.

When a man is represented to us as possessing great modesty and chastity, and is in a remarkable degree chaste in his conduct and conversation in the world, particularly amongst the female sex, we immediately give him our meed of praise ; and if it be further represented to us, that he is one who has withstood all the fashionable blandishments of seductive pleasure, which a refined and luxurious gallantry could furnish, and has never in one instance been known to swerve from the standard of rectitude and propriety, our praise will be heightened to a degree of admiration. But let it be hinted to us that this indifference to pleasure arises from other causes than those to which it is, in the judgment of the world, ascribed ; that the person in question, either from disease or from nature, was incapable of feeling the impulses of gross sensuality ; and we immediately alter our tone respecting him ; his chastity becomes no longer a theme of our praise and admiration ; and we would no more think him entitled to participate in our moral feelings of approbation and disapprobation than a



wooden post or a marble statue. The reason of this change of our sentiments and opinions is obvious. He is not considered in the light of a moral agent, for want of those natural passions on which the will could be exercised.

It is a common axiom in morals, that the stronger the temptation to any crime, the greater apology is there for committing it ; and, on the other hand, the greater the temptation, the greater is our virtue, if we succeed in overcoming it. Now the truth of this position cannot be maintained but upon the supposition that the principle endeavoured to be established here is correct—that a considerable portion of praise and blame is bestowed upon bad or good actions solely on account of the different degrees in which the *will* is supposed to have been engaged in the moral or immoral transactions. Lord Shaftsbury observes, “ If by temper any one is passionate, angry, fearful, amorous ; yet resists these passions, and, notwithstanding the force of their impression, adheres to *virtue* ; we say commonly in this case, *that the virtue is the greater*, and we say well ; though, if that which restrains the person, and holds him to a virtuous-like behaviour, be no affection towards goodness or virtue itself, but towards private good merely, he is not

in reality the more virtuous, as has been shown before. But this still is evident, that if *voluntarily*, and without any foreign constraint, an angry temper bears, or an amorous one refrains, so that neither any cruel or immodest action can be forced from such a person, though ever so strongly tempted by his constitution, we applaud his virtue above what we should naturally do, if he were free from this temptation and these propensities.\*

On the same principle, divines tell us, and tell us truly, that Adam's first transgression was greatly enhanced in guilt, inasmuch that there was no strong or natural temptation to commit the crime. There was no violent passion to gratify, nor any craving appetite to appease.

In the virtues of charity and benevolence, the effect of the will is very conspicuous in directing and guiding our sentiments of approbation. To help the necessitous, and be kind and benevolent to our friends and neighbours, are moral qualities of a very engaging kind ; but, however liberal we may be in dispensing to the poor the good things of this life, and however tender and sympathetic our deportment towards them, if the objects of our cha-

\* *Characteristics*, vol. ii. 37.

urity, as to the world at large, imagine they see any thing like compulsion ; or conceive that the *will* has not much to do with these acts of kindness and benevolence ; if, in short, they perceive that these acts of charity do not come, as it is termed, *from the heart*, then they never think of conferring praise upon the donors. If the world think that vanity, or ambition, which are commonly considered as in some degree laudable, have a considerable share in stimulating us to deeds of charity and beneficence, a proportional deduction is made from that portion of approbation we would be entitled to, were our actions looked upon as the spontaneous efforts of our *wills*. Hence I suppose constituted the propriety of that maxim of Scripture relative to charity, “let not thy left hand know what thy right doeth.”

Let us illustrate the power which the will has in creating in us moral feelings of approbation, by the following case. A ship is wrecked upon the coast, and the crew are seen by many individuals from the shore, soliciting assistance for the preservation of their lives, the loss of which, from all human probability, seems inevitable. The ship, dashing against the rocks, is struck by a heavy sea, which sweeps the captain off the wreck, and throws

him upon a rock, where he is enabled to reach the land in safety. The bystanders, seeing there is no time to be lost, and prompted by humanity to make an effort to save the remainder of the crew, succeed in throwing a rope across the ship, by which the crew are drawn ashore in safety. Now, there are here two powers engaged to produce the same effect—the preservation of life; but the one is an object of moral praise, and the other is an object of no praise at all. The wave that rescued the captain from the very jaws of death, may possibly be called a *fortunate* wave; but no one would think of calling it a *disinterested* wave, or a *humane* or *praiseworthy* wave. He may attribute his preservation to a special act of providence, but in doing this he recognises the power of divine *free agency*. On the other side, the case is different. The exertions of the men saved human life, as well as the wave which washed the captain on shore; but the former become objects of our praise and admiration; and solely for this reason, that they possessed the power within themselves of either making these humane exertions, or not making them.

When *Gil Blas* met the lame beggar on the highway, his charitable feelings were wonderfully heightened towards him when he perceived that

the object of his compassion, besides the hat stretched out for alms, had a musket resting on two sticks, with its muzzle pointed towards him. But no one, I think, would for a moment imagine that the commiseration and pecuniary assistance which *Gil Blas* bestowed upon this sturdy mendicant, could, under such circumstances, assume the name and character of true charity ; and for this obvious reason, that the apprehensions of personal danger may be supposed to have here extorted that which ought to have proceeded from what we are accustomed to consider as the source of true benevolence—the *spontaneous* bounties of the heart.

The common sense and common language of mankind are so clearly and unequivocally expressed upon this point, that we cannot possibly be wrong in conducting our speculations in this instance upon these universal feelings, and principles which have a place in every bosom, and actuate every human action. Whenever it is perceived that a man is under some restraint ; that he has not had the free exercise of his moral powers ; and that, however well disposed he may be towards a virtuous conduct, he has it not in his power to follow it ; we exonerate him altogether from the imputation of wickedness ; and consider that as he has not had

the free exercise of his will, he has incurred no moral responsibility, and is not a fit object for disapprobation or censure. And in like manner, when we perceive that a man acts from frenzy or delirium, or without knowing what he does, we do not look upon him as morally accountable for his actions, be they of a good or a bad tendency.

When we hear a person eulogized for his private virtues, we can safely determine *a priori*, that he is a person who has all his moral powers under complete subjection and authority; that he is not rash or intemperate on the one hand, nor weak, irresolute, or vacillating on the other. He gives to every question which comes before him a due share of his attention; and is not so easily surprised into bad, nor deterred from good actions as either weaker or inferior mortals. Such a character carries always with him the instruments of his own and others happiness. Cool, calculating, and prudential, he is always upon the alert to turn every circumstance to the advantage of virtue. He knows when to exercise caution and doubt, and when to be decisive and determined. The passions of his mind, which are implanted in his nature for certain valuable ends and purposes, are, in a great measure, under his command; and the line of demarcation

between gross sensuality and temperate indulgence is always, comparatively speaking, accurately and clearly defined to him. Day after day he subjects his conduct to the close and scrupulous ordeal of his own conscience, from which he derives secret and delicious pleasures as a reward for his uprightness, and also additional resolution to overcome the remaining portion of imperfection which is so closely interwoven with the better part of his constitution. In like manner, we can conduct our reasonings respecting immoral characters with the same unerring certainty and precision. When we hear a man censured for his immorality and indecencies, we immediately conclude that he is a slave to some passion or other ; that he has no command over his virtuous affections ; that he lays himself under temptations to vice which he has not the resolution to overcome ; and that when the suggestions of duty and the desires of vicious gratification come in contact, he becomes an object of weakness and irresolution, and yields himself up a reluctant victim on the altar of folly and wickedness.

This doctrine is beautifully laid down by Milton, in his *Paradise Lost*. In the ninth book of that fine poem, he portrays Adam and Eve going forth in the morning to their daily labours, to prune the

luxuriant foliage of the myrtles and spring roses ; and to wind the sweet and pliant woodbine over their arbour of innocence. Eve wishes to leave him to labour by herself, but Adam endeavours to persuade her that she may possibly, being alone, fall more easily into temptation of one desirous of their destruction, and whose existence and machinations the angel had just a little before made known to them. They discuss the power of the will ; and Adam is very desirous of impressing upon her mind that if their wills be separated or divided, the strength of both will be impaired, and they will the more readily fall victims to their seducer ; but if cordially united, they will impart to each other additional strength and vigour, and will eventually triumph over every temptation. Eve, however, saw no danger before her ; she maintained that her will was strong and powerful, and she longed for an opportunity of showing the strength of her virtue. After many kind expostulations from her partner, against her following a path so full of difficulties and dangers, he at length yielded to her desires, but not before giving her the following beautiful and philosophical admonition :—

“ O woman ! best are all things as the will  
Of God ordain'd them ; his creating hand,



Nothing imperfect, or deficient left,  
 Of all that he created ; much less man,  
 Or ought that might his happy state secure—  
 Secure from outward force, within himself  
 The danger lies, yet lies within his power ;  
 Against his will he can receive no harm ;  
 But God left free the will : for what obeys  
 Reason is free, and reason he made right ;  
 But bid her well beware and still exert,  
 Lest, by some fair appearing good surprised,  
 She dictate false, and misinform the will,  
 To do what God expressly hath forbid—  
 Not then mistrust, but tender love, enjoins  
 That I should mind thee oft ; and mind thou me !  
 Firm we subsist, yet possible to swerve ;  
 Since reason, not impossible, may meet  
 Some specious object, by the foe suborn'd ;  
 And fall into deception unawares,  
 Not keeping strictest watch as she was warned.—  
 Seek not temptation then, which to avoid  
 Were better ; and most likely if from me  
 Thou sever not ; trial will come unsought.—  
 Would'st thou approve thy constancy ?—approve  
 First thy obedience ; the other who can know,  
 Not seeing thou attempted ? Who attest ?  
 But if thou think trial unsought may find  
 Us both securer, than thus warn'd thou seemest,  
 Go ! for thy stay, not free, absents the more :  
 Go in thy native innocence ! rely  
 On what thou hast of virtue, summon all !  
 For God towards thee has done his part, do thine."

It appears evident that the great majority of mo-

ral writers, whatever their distinct theories may be, agree in this, that it is entirely by the exercise of the will that men regulate their praise or blame of any character ; and learn to deal out their censure and applause with unerring justice and accuracy, through all the different degrees of moral duty and delinquency. It is always the *motive*, the *will*, the *intention*, the *voluntary efforts* of the individual, which entitle him to praise or blame. And hence the doctrine so strictly insisted on by many moralists, that when men perform actions laudable in themselves, but which are supposed not to have had their origin in the will, they are not entitled to any commendation for the performance. Dr. Beattie informs us that, in Aristotle's opinion, "moral virtue is a voluntary disposition or habit ; and that moral approbation or disapprobation are excited by those actions and affections only which are in our own power ; that is, of which the first motion arises in ourselves, and proceeds from no extrinsic cause." The Doctor adds.—" This is true philosophy ; it is accurate, perspicuous, and just, and very properly determines the degree of merit of our intellectual and constitutional virtues. A man makes proficiency in knowledge, if in this he has acted from a desire to improve his nature, and qua-

lify himself for moral virtue, that desire, and the action consequent upon it, are virtuous, laudable, and of good desert." "Is his constitution naturally disposed to virtue?—he still has it in his power to be vicious, and therefore his virtue is truly meritorious; though not so highly as that of another man who, in spite of outrageous appetites and tempting circumstances, hath attained an equal degree of moral improvement."\* "Man's virtue and vice," says Marcus Aurelius, "consists not in those affections in which we are passive, but in action. To a stone thrown upward, it is no evil to fall, nor good to have mounted."† "The virtues of the soul," says Cicero, "and of its principal part the understanding, are various, but may be reduced to two kinds. The first are those which nature has implanted, and which we called *not voluntary*. The second kind are more properly called *virtues*, because they depend on the will; and these, as objects of approbation, are transcendently superior. Of the former kind are docility, memory, and all the virtues distinguished by the general name of genius or capacity; persons possessed of them are called ingenious. The latter class comprehends the

\* Essay on Truth, p. 426.

† Essay on Truth

*great and genuine virtues*, which we denominate *voluntary*, as prudence, temperance, fortitude, justice, and others of the same kind.”\*

Bishop Butler, in his analogy says, that “ our perceptions of ill desert in vicious actions, lessens, in proportion to the temptations men are thought to have had of such vices.” It is entirely upon this principle that man’s consciousness of good and evil rests. All men of sound mind impute their own moral actions to themselves, whether they be good or bad. It is from a consciousness, and firm conviction of this truth, that when we will and desire things which cause us trouble and uneasiness, we are more grieved in spirit, than when the same amount of evil comes upon us from ignorance or error. What is called in moral language a *good conscience*, is nothing else but a firm conviction in the mind of the person possessing it, that the evil actions which may be, from malice or misrepresentation, laid to his charge, or the troubles in which he may be involved, cannot be traced to his choice, or voluntary powers. A trifling evil, caused by our own free-will, is productive of a greater portion of uneasiness and mental suffering, than a greater

\* Essay on Truth, p. 429.

evil brought upon us by unavoidable misfortune, or by the act of another person. The force of conscience is frequently so powerful, that when evils of a serious or disgraceful nature have been brought upon us by our own choice, we feel the most poignant and smarting pains of self-reproach; even though we have succeeded in keeping our delinquencies from the eye of the world, or eluded the punishment of the laws. But when evils of a similar magnitude have befallen us by force, or by the concurrence of circumstances, over which we are supposed to have no control, we may think our fortune hard, and be loud in our complaints, but we will not be troubled with the irritating gnawings of the worm of conscience. I think Archbishop King is right in his grounds for founding the distinction between grief, when it proceeds from acts chosen by ourselves, and when it arises from unavoidable causes or misfortunes; he says, "If the grief arising from a crime be distinct from that which is occasioned by misfortune, it is plain that this can be on no other account, than because the crime proceeds from a free agent, *i. e.* one who determines himself to action, but the misfortune from a necessary one."\* The pains of conscience is a

\* Origin of Evil, page 201.

term expressive of the power of the will ; we repent and repine at having done those things only, which we conceive we had in our own power not to have done.

Those private virtues, the performance of which is supposed by mankind to be in a great measure enforced, by a strong and original passion in our nature, are not so highly praised as those virtuous habits and dispositions, which we consider removed at a farther distance from any similar bias. It is not, for example, considered any great stretch of moral virtue for a man to love his own children, or for children to feel and express an ardent attachment to their parents. The various duties which flow from the relation of parents and children are secured a pretty general performance, even in those states of society where the scale of general morality is very low, by the *innate* vigour of strong natural affections ; and on this account, mankind never express any high degree of praise or approbation for the performance of what nature seems to have laid them under by a certain degree of compulsion. Filial and parental affection are of the highest importance, as upon them may the various moral obligations of life be said to rest ; and, if mankind were to portion out their praise upon the duties which

are more immediately enforced by these affections, according to the standard of their real importance, our moral approbation would necessarily be very high. But this is contrary to the common notions and language of mankind. If a man live in the habitual contempt of the other duties which morality enjoins upon him, he will not be screened from general execration by the circumstance, that he is kind and affectionate to his offspring, or to his own parents. People in general will say, he deserves little praise for expressing those sentiments of tenderness and affection, for the beasts of the field do the same.

The same principle will be found to pervade the whole of our moral affections and obligations. Whenever our duty lies in opposition to some strong passion or affection, then is our virtue more noble and magnanimous, and calls forth a greater portion of praise and approbation from our fellow-men. We must be free to a certain degree, even from our moral desires and impulses; there must be room for the practice of self-denial; there must be a struggle with the temptation; before we can properly insure any portion of praise for our conduct. And agreeably to this view, the late Dr. Brown observes, that "His is the only genuine

strength of heart who resists, not the force of a few fears only, to which, even in the eyes of the world, it is ignominious for man to yield; but the force of *every* temptation to which it would be unworthy of men to yield, even though the world, in its capricious allotments of honour and shame, might not have chosen to regard with ignominy that particular species of cowardice.”\*

I shall conclude this chapter by a quotation from Dr. Beattie, on the general nature of our moral responsibility. “Moral agency,” he says, “further implies, that we are accountable for our conduct; and that if we do what we ought not to do, we deserve blame and punishment. My conscience tells me that I am accountable for those actions only that are in my own power; and neither blames nor approves, in myself or others, that conduct which is the effect, not of choice, but of necessity. Convince me, that all my actions are equally necessary, and you silence my conscience for ever, or at least prove it to be a fallacious and impertinent monitor; you will then convince me, that all circumspection is unnecessary, and all remorse absurd.”†

\* Philosophy of the Mind, vol. iv. 562.

† Essay on Truth, page 355.



## CHAPTER VI.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE FREE-WILL,  
FROM AN EXAMINATION OF NATURAL AND REVEALED  
RELIGION.

It may, I think, be laid down as a general maxim, that natural and revealed religion united contain the *will* of God to man ; natural religion being made manifest to us by the constitution of nature, and our moral powers ; and revealed religion by the express declaration of God himself. This *will* contains the law made for our especial direction and observance. The framing and promulgation of any law, do necessarily presuppose two things ;—first, that the law is made by a being or power, which has within himself, or itself, the free-will either to make the law or not to make it ; and secondly, that the creatures for whom the law is

made, have the power to observe its rules and precepts.

With respect to the first principle—a principle involved in the nature of all law, it is clear that our obligation to observe it must be in consideration of its having proceeded from a *lawgiver*, from one who is possessed *within himself* of ample powers to enforce its statutes upon those for whom the law is made. If the law were to be the effect of *necessity*, of *fate*, of *chance*, or of *accident*, it could contain nothing obligatory, as it would then want that indispensable ingredient in all laws, according to the conceptions we form of them, a discretionary power to punish transgressors in case of disobedience. The *will* of God, we say, is the *law* for our guidance, and he has *willed*, *desired* and *enacted* that our happiness shall be inseparably connected with the observance of this law ; we are therefore entitled to draw the conclusion, that the force and value, the moral obligation of this law, are solely and exclusively derived from its having proceeded from the *free*, *unfettered*, and *unconstrained* exercise of the *will* of an all-powerful and intelligent author.

Let us view this matter in any light we please, we will find that we can form to ourselves no just

or consistent conceptions of the Deity, or of the laws of his creation and providence, without we take for granted his attribute of *spontaneity*, or the power of doing whatsoever he pleaseth. And on this point I perfectly agree with Archbishop King, who maintains that the law of God is good, holy, and binding upon us solely from its having been willed into existence by him. King says,—

“ The divine will is the cause of good in the creature, whereon they depend, as almost every one acknowledges ; for created beings have all that they have from the will of God : nor can they be any thing else than what he willed. It is plain, then, that all these are conformable and consonant to his will, either efficient or permissive, and that their original goodness is founded in this consonancy. And since all things proceed from one and the same will, which cannot be contrary to itself, as it is restrained within its proper bounds by infinite wisdom, it is also certain that all things are consistent with each other, and that every thing contributes as much as possible to the preservation of itself and the whole system ; which we must reckon their *secondary goodness*. All the goodness, then, of the creatures, is owing to the Divine will, and dependant on it ; for we cannot apprehend how

they could be either good or evil in themselves, since they were nothing at all antecedent to the act of the divine will : and they were as far from being good with regard to God himself, till, upon willing their existence, he, by that act of election, both constituted good in relation to him, and, by an unity of will, made them agreeable to another. It is evident that the divine will was accompanied in this, as in all other cases, by his goodness and wisdom, and the immediate consequence of this is, that things please God, *i. e.* are good.”\*

The second supposition, that our amenability to a law arises from our ability to observe its injunctions, will also be fully apparent, if we will attend for a moment to the nature of the thing. To deny that man had the *power within himself* to observe the law, would be to destroy his moral responsibility altogether. It is little short of absolute trifling to maintain that man has not the power to observe the precepts of a law made expressly for his observance, benefit and happiness. There can no blame attach to a man for not doing that which he has no power to perform.

There is a striking resemblance, a perfect analo-

\* Origin of Evil, p. 186.

gy, between the divine laws and those of man, so far as those principles are concerned which render them both, in our estimation, binding and obligatory. In all human laws, it is necessary they proceed from an intelligent cause, and the *voluntary agency* of the power which makes them, and also that the laws be such as the persons for whom they are enacted have the power to observe. In the divine law it is necessary for us to assume that it was made by a being of infinite wisdom, and who was quite at liberty either to make or not to make it; and also that the law is such as we have the power to obey. The law of man, if just and reasonable, ought to be a transcript of the leading principles of the divine law.

But, besides these considerations, let us prosecute these inquiries a little further, and we will find, that all our just and correct notions respecting the existence, attributes, and moral government of the Deity, and, in fact, of the principles of natural theology generally, are so closely interwoven and identified with the doctrine of *free agency*, that it seems utterly impossible to separate them even in thought. What ideas can we form of the Almighty where all *free agency* is excluded? Why none but those which Spinoza formed, and which the author

of the "*Système de la Nature*" endeavours to inculcate ; where a blind, stern, gloomy, irrevocable necessity, is the only deity which their reasonings can recognise, the only object of their veneration and worship. The very rude notion of Deity which prevails amongst the savage and unenlightened portion of mankind, consists of this, that he is supposed to be endowed with the power of doing or not doing as seemeth good in his eyes. When we look upon the enchanting aspect and inimitable order of the universe ; when we see so much design, wisdom, and goodness around us ; when we see such a host of animated beings all endowed with powers so nicely and wonderfully adapted to their several constitutions and ways of life ; and when we perceive the different portions of comfort and happiness served out to each class agreeable to its condition, and the capacities of its nature, we feel our bosoms glow with the sentiments of admiration and love towards Him who created and governs every thing by his power, wisdom, and goodness. But we would feel none of these heart-stirring and delightful emotions, were we to be convinced that every thing we see is the work of an absolute necessity, and could not have been otherwise than in the state we see them. It is because we conceive

those things we admire to be the works of the Almighty's *will*, the fruits of his free and unfettered choice, that we bestow upon them the epithets of wonderful, skilful, and beneficent. It is to this principle that we owe all our notions of Deity, and derive all those feelings of amazement, respect, and dependence which constitute the essential ingredients in the natural theology of mankind, in all states and conditions.

There is an argument frequently employed by writers on natural religion, in favour of the existence of a Divine being, drawn from analogy, which is of great force, and which derives all its strength from the doctrine of *free agency*. The argument is this,—wherever we see fitness of one thing to another, a certain adaptation of means to ends in any piece of mechanism or intellectual skill, such as a beautiful and convenient building, a fine statue or picture, then we are led, by an irresistible principle in our nature, to attribute these effects to design, or to a designing and intelligent cause. Accordingly, when we see the beauty and grandeur of the universe, and the admirable fitness and propriety of one thing to another in this magnificent apparatus, we are led to attribute every thing therein contained, and which our eyes behold with wonder

and awe, to a *Parent* mind, an intelligent cause. Now this argument is very powerful and conclusive, and has, besides, a very extensive and general influence over mankind of every rank and condition; yet it owes all its force to the doctrine of *free agency*. What we mean by *mind*, or *intelligence*, or *design*, as here used, is a certain power, which *may* or *may not* be exercised, something which has, or is supposed to have, a *discretionary power of exercise contained within itself*. If we fall in with a watch or any other piece of mechanism in our rambles in the fields, we immediately, after examining it, attribute it to be the work of some intelligent agent, an agent who had the power *within himself*, of either making or not making this machine. Were we ever to exclude, in our reasonings, the notions of *freedom* in the artist, we would never think of applying the terms, *skillful*, *intelligent*, &c. to the machine, nor would there be any analogy, from such an incident as is here supposed, in which to form an argument in favour of a general superintending and intelligent author of the universe.

We believe the Deity to possess certain moral attributes, such as goodness, humanity, pity, justice, &c. Now the very conception of these moral qua-



lities involves the notion of *free will*, and certainly the exercise of them must do so likewise. A *necessary* goodness, a *necessary* humanity, a *necessary* benevolence, or a *necessary* justice, are words without meaning ; or if there be any meaning in them, it is only discernible to those whose reason and common sense have been bewildered by silly and empty sophisms, and whose better affections and feelings have been blunted and depraved by a long and familiar intercourse with the doctrines and arguments of atheists and fatalists.

What a necessary and indispensable ingredient *free will* is, in the feelings and obligations which natural religion inspire and enforce, will appear evident by the slightest and most superficial investigation into the subject. We regard the Deity as our father, our benefactor, who has endowed us with all our various powers and faculties ; who every moment of our existence upholds us with his power, and blesses us with his bounty ; who views us with a look of complacency and pity, and who listens with affection and kindness to all our supplications ; makes allowances for all our imperfections, and for the coldness and languor of our devotional feelings towards him. Under a deep sense and awful recognition of his omniscience, we express our grati-

tude to him, and thankfully acknowledge the important and manifold benefits we daily and hourly receive at his hands, and to express our gratitude by actions as well as words, we desire to know his *will* that we may endeavour to regulate our conduct by its rules and precepts.

But how inconsistent would all this appear to be, if the principle of necessity were applied to the conduct of the Deity ; if the spontaneous exercise of this *free will* was set aside ? Why give thanks for benefits which could not have been withheld ? Why express our gratitude for this tenderness and compassion towards us, when these feelings are only part of the necessary constitution of His nature ? Why raise up our hands with a devotional feeling for his kindness and affection in listening to our complaints, and attending to our wants, when he cannot deviate from the eternal laws of necessity and fatalism ? In fact, why adore or worship at all, seeing that such admiration and worship cannot alter what is eternally decreed, or change in one tittle what necessity has imposed ? The nature and sole essence of all religious worship and adoration is, that the Being to whom it is addressed has the power to attend to our prayers and supplications, and to give us, if he thinks meet,

the things we require.\* Take away *free will* from the Deity, and you take away the foundation of all natural and revealed religion. Indeed the word *religion* is altogether unintelligible and unmeaning upon any theory either of divine or human necessity.

In heathen mythology, the gods and goddesses are represented as possessing the power of *free will*; and what good or ill they are supposed to dispense amongst mankind, is the fruit of their own *free* and unbiassed choice. Even the objects which the most foolish and debased idolatry has in all ages set up to adore and worship, are also endowed, in the opinions of their deluded disciples and votaries, with spontaneous action; and no doctrine is considered more heterodox and wicked than that these idols have not the power of performing or not performing the various actions which are required of them.

Let us consider the matter ever so closely, we will find that we can form to ourselves no rational or intelligible conceptions of the divine nature or government, of human worship or adoration, nor of the ways of providence in general, where *free* agency, either divine or human, or both, are excluded. And on this point I fully agree with an

eloquent and clever, though on many important matters a mistaken writer, who says, "What we shall do for ourselves, he (the Almighty) has left to the freedom of our elections ; for *free-will* seems so essential to rational beings, that I presume we cannot conceive any such to be without it, though we easily conceive them restrained in the exercise of what they will. This plan is that of divine wisdom ; and whatever our imaginations may suggest, we know nothing more particular, and indeed nothing at all more, of the constitution and order of the human system, nor of the dispensations of providence, than this."\*

From the few hints and casual remarks which Scripture has furnished us with, respecting the nature of angels and spiritual beings, we are led to conclude that they were possessed of the power of *free-will* ; and from being endowed with this faculty, they became moral agents. They were made capable of transgressing the divine law ; and in consequence of being in this probationary state, some withstood the influence of evil, and others did not. This doctrine is alluded to by *Milton*, when he says—

\* Bolingbroke's Philosophical Works, vol. v. p. 103.

“ Such I created all th’ ethereal powers  
 And spirits, both them who stood, and them who fail’d;  
 Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.” \*

The same poet endeavours to show that these angels could not have performed any act of worship or obedience to God, had they not been possessed with this power of *free-will*. Though poets may not, perhaps, be considered the best reasoners, or the best authorities on such abstract matters, yet the sound philosophy contained in these few lines will appear manifest to every one who has any knowledge of such doctrines.

“ Not free, what proof could they have giv’n sincere  
 Of true allegiance, constant faith, or love,  
 Where only what they needs must do, appear’d,  
 Not what they would ? What praise could they receive?  
 What pleasure I from such obedience paid,  
 When will and reason, (reason also is choice)  
 Useless and vain, of freedom both dispoil’d,  
 Made passive both, and served *necessity*,  
 Nqt me ?” †

Milton also describes *Satan*, when he had been vanquished and driven out of heaven, and when he had summoned all his fallen host to infuse cou-

\* Paradise Lost, book iii.

† Ibid.

rage into them for the future works of mischief he and they were to perform ; as relying solely upon the strength of his *free-will* for the final accomplishment of his deeds. He felt the power of action within himself strong and vigorous, and he cheered the drooping spirits of his less energetic companions, by assuring them of complete success by dint of that

“ *unconquerable will*

And study of revenge, immortal hate,

And courage never to submit or yield.”\*

In the Scripture account of the creation of man, and the portion of happiness he enjoyed previously to his disobedience, we learn that Adam was endowed with the power of *free agency* of the most perfect and absolute kind. The Almighty is represented by the poet as saying,

“ I made him just, and right,

Sufficient to have stood, but free to fall.”

We are not left to discover this fact by any long or difficult process of reasoning ; but we find it deducible from the very simple fact, that God prescribed to man a test or trial of his obedience.

\* Paradise Lost, book i.

This test must presuppose his power of *free agency*, and it was from the command delivered to him by God, that his moral responsibility was established. Theologians tell us, (and theirs is the language of Scripture), that before man's fall his *will* was perfect, and that he was, *on this account*, morally holy and upright ; but that, after his disobedience, his *will* became imperfect and corrupted, and he was no longer able to comply, to the full extent, with all the rules and precepts contained in the divine law.

In the commandment which was delivered to our first parents, we may clearly see, that it was the *will* of the Almighty which alone made it obligatory upon them to observe it. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat ; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The promulgation of this decree could have nothing, in Adam and Eve's eyes, obligatory in it, save the solemn injunction God had laid upon them to observe it. To them there could appear no necessary or natural connexion between the transgression and the punishment ; nor can the decree be viewed by us even now in any other light but that of an arbitrary one, when disjoined from

the *will* of him who ordained it. It surely cannot be pretended that there is here any fitnesses of things, any immutable and eternal relations, which could not have been altered, even by the Deity himself. The whole value of the decree, its moral obligation, its sacredness, and vast importance, are solely resolvable into the *will* of God who ordained it.

It may also be worthy of remark, in passing here, that the conduct of Adam after his transgression is strikingly illustrative of the connexion between the *free-will* of man, and the censure or approbation we bestow upon his moral actions. He put forth an apology for his having trampled upon the divine commands, by stating that he had been subjected to severe trial and temptation, and that it had in some measure been *against his will* that he had committed the offence. “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat :” language evidently declaratory that he did not conceive he was so guilty as Eve was ; and in consequence of the temptation to which she had subjected him, he hoped to find more mercy and consideration from the Deity.

In looking at the Scriptures as a whole, and in attending to their general bearing and import,



we must come to the conclusion, that they contain the divine rules for men's moral government while here on earth, and that he has *within himself* the power, to a considerable extent, of observing these divine rules and precepts. This conclusion is so much in unison with the dictates of reason and common sense, that we cannot refuse our assent to it ; and with regard to the declarations of Scripture on this point, they are so numerous, so decided, and so unreservedly and plainly laid down, that it is said, " that he who runs may read, and a wayfaring man, though a stranger, cannot err."

If we consider the moral government of the Deity as a rational and equitable one, we must assume that he would not have commanded men to perform what they were not, from their constitution, able to do. The Scriptures are full of moral precepts, with express sanctions of rewards and punishments to them ; and the Almighty expostulates with us in the most earnest and sympathetic manner, to practise the various duties and commands which he has delivered to us for our especial guidance and happiness. God frequently tells us that he is not willing that any man should perish ; and in hundreds of instances, tells us in plain and direct language, that if destruction come upon us,

it will lie at our own door, for want of the proper exercise of our own powers.

It would be easy to fill a volume with quotations from the sacred writings, wherein man's moral ability to do what is commanded of him is unconditionally recognised ; but this course will not be necessary here. Every person who pays even common attention to the religious duties and opinions of a Christian country, is well acquainted with innumerable passages which have this import. Besides, what has been advanced in favour of natural religion from the influence of free-will, may with equal force and propriety be advanced in favour of revealed religion. If the former suffer from notions of necessity and fatalism, and seem incompatible with any modification of these doctrines, so must the latter ; they both stand upon the same ground ; and what exercises a favourable influence over the one, must also exercise a favourable influence over the other.

I shall, however, just notice two facts in Scripture, which illustrate the power of *free-will*. The first is, that striking part of Scripture where it is related that David, being driven by hunger, was compelled to take the shew or holy bread, to satisfy the cravings of nature. This act, under ordi-

nary circumstances, would have amounted to sacrilege, one of the most heinous crimes which a man can commit. It is a crime committed against God himself, and is therefore worthy of the severest punishment. Yet we are told that David was not considered as acting a criminal part by this deed, seeing that he was compelled by necessity to perform it. We here see the power which is attributed to the will. David is not considered, when under the pinching effects of hunger, to be a moral agent, as his will was under constraint from the privations he endured. There was *no choice* for him ; he was either to satisfy his hunger with the sacred bread, or perish. If we were to suppose the contrary, that he had it in his power, without any great personal danger or injury, either to do or not to do without this bread ; then, instead of being blameless, he would be considered guilty of a heinous crime against the Almighty. The second fact is that contained in the passage in the book of Jonah, respecting the destruction of the city of Nineveh. The language is very expressive of the connexion between just punishment and voluntary agency. “ And shall not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons *that cannot discern between their*

*right hand and their left ; and also much cattle.\**  
 The sole reason assigned here for not destroying the inhabitants of this city was, that they knew not right from wrong ; they were in fact not moral agents.

Many of the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion must have been considered binding and obligatory upon them, *from no other reason than that they were appointed and commanded to be observed by the will of the Almighty.* The sacrificing of bulls and of goats, and the sprinkling of the ashes of an heifer, could not abstractly or of themselves be considered in the light of moral duties ; they only became invested with the force of such, from the sole circumstance that they emanated from the *will* of the Most High. And though these rites and ceremonies of the Jewish church be considered as types and figures of other subsequent events, they are types and figures to us, and were not to the Jews who then observed them ; so that this circumstance does not alter the abstract nature of the Jewish ritual, or make that a positive moral duty which was only clothed with the attributes of moral obligation, from having been constituted the *will* or *law* of God.

\* Jonah iv. 10,

Looking at the existence of the Levitical law in all its bearings, it strikingly points out to us how certain things become invested with moral obligation solely from having been commanded by the Deity. Those who contend for the eternal and immutable nature of moral truths (using the words in their absolute sense, as meaning that these truths were coeval with God himself, and independent of his will), must be greatly puzzled to show how it happened, that this law had all the force of a moral law amongst the people for whom it was promulgated, without possessing any of those inherent relations or characteristic features which distinguish what we usually term moral actions, sentiments, and opinions. The Jewish people were, for example, enjoined to abstain from using the flesh of certain animals for food, though the flesh of these animals was not by any means considered in *itself* of a disagreeable or noxious nature. Though this command had all the force of a moral precept, it will not, I apprehend, be maintained, that there was any *natural fitness*,—any thing agreeable or conformable to the *nature of things* in obeying this part of the Mosaic ritual, more than what the mere command of the Almighty conferred upon it. If there were an eternal *moral fitness* in the Jewish

nation abstaining from eating the flesh of certain animals, and in observing other ceremonial rights and privileges at the time these things were enjoined upon them by the Deity himself, then this *fitness*, this immutable moral truth, must exist in these actions yet ; and, consequently, those laws of the Jewish ritual must be as obligatory and binding upon us now, as they were upon the Israelites at the time of their promulgation, or at any subsequent period of their history. If these laws are *now* destitute of moral obligation and force, then what becomes of the eternal nature of moral distinctions ; and what circumstance was it which conferred upon these rites and ceremonies that moral weight and influence which they formerly possessed, and of which they are now deprived ? The true answer to this question is, that these laws, rites, and ceremonies were considered holy, fit, and reasonable, *merely* because they were commanded by the Almighty ; they were *his will*, and from this cause, and from this alone, was their moral obligation derived.

But I am fully aware that it may be objected to me here, that there are many who hold very different opinions as to the nature of the divine law, as manifested in the constitution of nature, and the

declarations of Scripture ; and also as to man's capability of observing all or any part of the precepts contained in these laws. I am very far from thinking that those who hold the doctrine of predestination and sovereign grace, have little or no countenance from reason and Scripture ; quite the reverse. With respect to the arguments which may be urged in favour of these views, from mere abstract reasoning, I always do think them of a very cogent and powerful nature. When we admit the existence of a supreme and intelligent governor of the universe, we must also admit his attribute of omniscience, or that he has the power to foresee all events, past, present, and future. Indeed we cannot form any conceptions of the Deity without this attribute of foreknowing all events. Now here is a principle, possessing all the force, when properly stated, of intuitive suggestion ; but which is, nevertheless, contrary to some of our most familiar notions. But the Calvinist is justly entitled to this principle, on which he may safely rest his whole system ; being well assured that he is completely sheltered from any *logical* refutation. Many systems and views, both in morals and religion, are maintained upon a more slender foundation than that of Predestinarianism ; and it is,

therefore, far from right or candid to say, with some, that the religious theory in question is visionary, inconsistent, unreasonable, and unscriptural.

But at the same time I beg to differ from this system, as far as its principles may be supposed to have a bearing upon theoretical and practical morality, and I do so principally upon two grounds, which I shall content myself with merely stating, as briefly as possible, without going at any length into the general question. First, then, predestination is contrary to man's moral agency; and, secondly, the leading and fundamental principle of the system is the same as that of necessity, or fate, and is liable to the same objections.

In regard to the first objection, I will merely remark, that those who know any thing about the real merits of the controversy between the predestinarians and their antagonists, know that the principal argument brought forward by the latter against the system of the former, is, that man's moral agency, and his consequent responsibility, cannot be maintained on the predestinarian hypothesis. All candid advocates for election allow that this is a formidable objection, and they qualifyingly admit its force by calling it a *difficulty*.



Now, what is meant by *a difficulty*? Do we mean by this expression that the reconciling of the *free will* of men with the *prescience of God* is a difficulty to some men and not to others? Has any one, no matter what portion of genius or learning he may have brought to the task, ever overcome this difficulty? All candid predestinarians will answer this in the negative. On the other hand, it must be admitted, that there are many very weighty objections on the opposite side of the question; so that the only alternative that is left us, is a choice of difficulties. Any attempt to reconcile the two doctrines—the prescience of God, and the free-will of man—*upon the principles of abstract reasoning*, may be safely pronounced to be quite visionary and futile.

In the second place, I consider the doctrine of predestination as the same in principle; *so far as the human will is concerned*, as the doctrine of what is termed philosophical necessity, and liable to all the objections, on the score of speculative morality, to which that doctrine is exposed. It is true that these two doctrines may differ widely in several points of view; as, for example, some of the advocates of necessity may say, that in their scheme they exclude a supreme and intelligent

cause of things, and that *their* necessity is a general one, including and pervading the whole system of nature. The predestinarian, on the other hand, may say, he admits the existence of a wise governor of the world, in whose eternal counsels and fore-knowledge the conduct and condition of us, his children, were fixed and preordained before the world was. Now these two doctrines differ considerably, but there is no difference between them in *respect to the human will* ; for it is completely under control in both systems ; and this is the only point for our consideration here. These two doctrines, however dissimilar they may be in other respects, must, upon this ground, be completely identified.

But it may be remarked, by way of conclusion to this chapter, that it does not materially affect the principles and reasonings laid down in this Essay, whether the predestinarian theory be right or wrong ; for upon the supposition that it is well-founded, it will go to establish this point—that though our wills and all our actions are under the Almighty's sovereign control, yet He is free to act in all matters which appertains to man's present conduct and future expectations ; that it is *solely* upon the act of His *free-will* or *free-grace*

that they rest their hopes of happiness beyond the grave. Hence, then, it is maintained, that our notions of the rectitude of the moral government of the Deity, all ideas of Christian duty and obedience, and the stability and permanency of our future expectations, are founded upon the doctrine of *Divine free agency* ; a position, illustrative, as far as it goes, of the principles contained in this Essay. Besides, it may be remarked, that the perpetual effort, (whether a successful one, is a different question) which has so commonly been made by writers on election, to show that *their system* did not militate against the common notions of man's moral agency, but, on the contrary, that these notions were perfectly reconcilable with the doctrine of election, may be considered as tantamount to an unconditional declaration, that our notions of morality are inseparable from the opinions we form to ourselves of moral *free-will*.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED—AN EXAMINATION  
OF THE VIEWS OF SEVERAL EMINENT WRITERS ON  
THE FREE-WILL OF THE DEITY.

---

IN the writings of Leibnitz and Jonathan Edwards, though zealous disciples of the necessarian scheme, we will find, that when they come to apply their principles to the doctrines of natural and revealed religion, they illustrate these principles with so many qualifications and reservations, that it becomes not only difficult to say what opinions they really do hold on necessary influence when applied to religious subjects ; but they lay themselves open to inferences favourable to the opposite side of the controversy. From the general line of argument which they both follow, it would seem that they are very desirous to avoid the doctrine of neces-

sity in its absolute sense, as it appeared to them hostile to all our just notions of Deity, and of moral obligation. Leibnitz says that men are influenced in their actions by representations of good and evil, *certainly* and *infallibly*, but not *necessarily* ; and that the Deity was *infallibly* but not *necessarily* induced to create the world by his wisdom and goodness, and that this act of creation was perfect in all its parts, *and the result of the most perfect and complete liberty of action*.\* He perceives clearly that necessity, in its common acceptance, is entirely at variance with right conceptions of the divine nature and attributes ; and he labours hard to avoid the plain, but to him dis-

\* "Cela posé, l'on voit comment nous pouvons dire avec plusieurs Philosophes et Theologiens célèbres, que la substance qui pense est portée à sa resolution par la representation prevalente du bien ou du mal, et cela *certainement* et *infailliblement*, mais non pas *necessairement* : c'est à dire, par des raisons qui l'inclinent sans necessiter. C'est pourquoi *les futures contingens*, prévu et en aux-mêmes et par leurs raisons, demeurent contingens ; et Dieu a été porté infailliblement par sa sagesse et par sa bonté à créer le monde par sa puissance, et à lui donner la meilleur forme possible ; mais il n'y étoit point porté *necessairement* ; et le tout s'est passé sans aucune diminution de sa liberté parfaite et souveraine. Et sans consideration que nous venons de faire, je ne sais s'il seroit aisé de resoudre le nœud Gordien de la contingence et de la liberté." *Remarques sur le Livre de l'Origine du Mal.*

agreeable inference, which follows so clearly from his positions. Hence the various subtile and verbal distinctions, and qualifications, which clog his arguments on this subject. Viewing what he says in the most candid and dispassionate frame of mind, his language is so indefinite and equivocal, that it appears in many places to be tantamount to a virtual renunciation of his own professed principles.

The same remarks that are here made on Mr. Leibnitz, equally apply to the writings of Dr. Jonathan Edwards, on the nature of the Divine will. I take the following words as containing the substance of his remarks on this subject. "The sovereignty of God is his ability and authority to do *whatever pleases him* ; whereby 'He doeth according to *his will* in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou.' The following things belong to the sovereignty of God, viz. (1.) Supreme, universal, and infinite *power*, whereby he is able to do what he pleases, *without control*, without any confinement of that power, without any subjection, in the least measure, to any other power ; and so, without any hinderance or restraint, that it should be either impossible or

at all difficult for him to *accomplish his will* ; and without any dependence of his power, on any other power, from whence it should be derived, or which it would stand in any need of ; so far from this, that all other power is derived from him, and is absolutely dependent upon him. (2.) That he has supreme *authority* ; absolute and most perfect right to do what *he wills*, without subjection to any superior, or any derivation of authority from any other, or limitation by any distinct independent authority, either superior, equal, or inferior ; he being the head of all dominion, and fountain of all authority, and also without restraint by any obligation, implying either subjection, derivation, or dependence, or proper limitation. (3.) Thus his *will* is supreme, underived, and independent of any thing without himself ; being in every thing determined by his own counsel, *having no other rule but his own wisdom* ; his will not being subject to, or restrained by the will of any other, and other wills being perfectly subject to his. (4.) That his *wisdom*, which DETERMINES *his will*, is supreme, perfect, underived, self-sufficient, and independent ; so that it may be said, as in Isaiah xl. 14, ‘ With whom took he counsel ? and who instructed him and taught him the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and

showed him the way of understanding?" There is no other divine sovereignty but this, and this is properly *absolute sovereignty*: no other is desirable, nor would any other be honourable or happy; and indeed there is no other conceivable or possible. It is the glory and greatness of the Divine sovereign, that *God's will is determined by his own infinite all-sufficient wisdom* in every thing; and in nothing at all is it either directed by any inferior wisdom, or by no wisdom, whereby it would become senseless arbitrariness, determining and acting without reason, design, or end."\*

From this passage we may observe that it is explicitly laid down here that any thing like constraint, influence, or power, exercised over the divine nature, would be totally destructive of its essence. This declaration is sufficient to show that our notions of necessary connexion, or dependence, are hostile to correct conceptions of the divine government. But the principal thing worthy of consideration here, and which bears upon the doctrine immediately under notice, is that which affirms that the *infinite wisdom* of God regulates, acts upon, impels, disposes, and rules his

\* On the Freedom of the Will, part iv. sect. 7.



*infinite will.* The Doctor thought that by removing the divine will from any influence *external to the Deity*, and by placing that influence *within himself*, he was setting the question out of the reach of all cavil; but in this, I think, he was mistaken, for the difficulties are only taken from one place and set down in another. How does this attribute of wisdom act upon the will? Does this *infinite wisdom* contain within *itself* the principle of its own movements? Wisdom in the divine Being, as well as amongst us, his finite creatures, must mean something which *is done*; some *particular action or motion*, directed to some particular *end*, and productive of some particular consequence, or consequences; but if it moved of itself, it must have moved, or acted upon, or influenced another thing *without any cause, end, purpose, motive*, or object, which, according to the principle running through the whole of Dr. Edwards' reasonings on the freedom of the will, must be impossible and absurd. The divine will is here represented as an entirely *passive thing*, unable of itself to do any thing without being moved, or set in motion by *infinite wisdom*; but in what manner, or by what causes this attribute of infinite wisdom *itself* is directed or brought into action,

we are not informed. This omission, this difficulty, is calculated to teach us, that we cannot form to ourselves consistent or intelligible notions of the divine nature, without supposing, or taking for granted, a degree of *spontaneity* in the Deity. If we wish to reason rationally on his attributes, we must invest one of these attributes with *spontaneous motion*, to guide, direct, move, or call into action the rest; and this underived power may, for any thing which can be advanced to the contrary, be as properly vested in the *will*, as in any other attribute. It must always be borne in mind, that the same arguments drawn from the difficulty of conceiving how the human will can act *without motives*, present themselves when we maintain that the *infinite wisdom* of the Deity is exercised *without any motive foreign to its own nature*. The objections in both cases are founded upon the same principle, and must stand or fall together.

In the discussions between Leibnitz and Dr. Clarke on liberty and necessity, we find the Doctor maintaining that freedom of action in the divine mind is indispensably requisite to enable us to form correct ideas of the Deity, and of his moral government. He says—" 'Tis very true that nothing is, without a sufficient reason why it is,

and why it is *thus* rather than *otherwise*. And, therefore, where there is *no cause*, there can be *no effect*. But this *sufficient reason* is oftentimes no other than the *mere will* of God. For instance,—why *this* particular system of matter should be created in one particular place, when—(all place being absolutely indifferent to *all matter*)—it would have been exactly the same thing *vice versa*, supposing the two systems (or the particles) of matter to be alike, there can be *no other reason* but the mere will of God, which, if it could in no case act without a predetermining cause, any more than a balance can move without a preponderating weight, this would tend to take away all power of choosing, and to introduce *fatality*.” Leibnitz replies to Dr. Clarke, but says not a single word against what is here stated.

The principal arguments against the doctrine that morality is founded upon the *will* of God, are the following.

1st, This doctrine takes it for granted that what is now denominated virtue or merit, and vice or demerit, became such purely and solely from an act of the *divine will*; and if this exercise of the will of the Deity had not taken place, there

would not have been any such things as virtue or vice—merit or demerit. If the world had existed either from chance or necessity, and in the state and condition we now see it, then virtue and vice would have possessed, relatively to each other, an indifferent, if not a common nature. What was praiseworthy, honest, and conducive to our happiness, would have had then no distinctive character from what was immoral, dishonest, and destructive of our peace. In founding the existence and nature of virtue and vice upon the pure will and pleasure of the Almighty, we stamp both with equal authority, and confound the qualities of each.

2d, If the mere act of the will of the Almighty, abstractly considered, made or created that which we call virtue, and rendered it obligatory upon us *because*, and *only because*, it was the act of his will, then vice, which is in its nature and effects quite opposite from virtue, being likewise created and called into operation by this selfsame act of the will, must be considered as possessing a power of obligation upon us every way equal with virtue itself, and that wickedness and folly became as excellent in their natures and effects as goodness and wisdom, seeing that, if the *will* made virtue, and

vice owed its nature and effects to the same will, then they must both be, in every respect, alike.

3d, The principle which maintains that virtue and vice owed their existence and distinctive character to the will of God, presupposes that before the exercise of the will, virtue and vice had nothing different in their natures, but were viewed, as it were, by the eye of the Almighty as one and the same, and therefore there would seem to have been no *motive* or inducement in the Almighty to create a difference, or give a preference to virtue more than to vice.

4th, The Almighty might, if he had chosen, have ordained that man should rebel against him, and not obey him, should hate and not love him, and might have violated with benefit and pleasure the whole ten commandments.

5th, The doctrine now under consideration is inconsistent with the attribute of the Deity which we call *omniscient*. Every thing which has been created was seen from eternity, or existed, as it were, in the divine mind; for the past, the present, and the future, are but as one to him. All moral natures, moral relations, and moral consequences, must have been, with other things in the divine

mind, prior to their creation ; that is, must have existed in the same manner as figurative representations of material or moral objects may exist in our own minds, perfect in all their parts and relations ; such, for example, as a landscape, or a moral being endowed with passions, virtues, or vices, such as are commonly described by us in works of fiction.

6th, The scheme that morality depends upon the *will* of God, “ not only involves in it, that mankind, with all their impiety, injustice, cruelty, oppressions, wars, and butcheries, are in their nature equally amiable and excellent as angels, with all their truth and benevolence, but also, that the character of fiends is in itself, and independently of the fact that God chose it should be otherwise, just as lovely, excellent, and praiseworthy, as that of angels. If then God had willed the character which Satan adopted and sustains to be moral excellence, and that which Gabriel sustains to be moral worthlessness, these two beings continuing in every other respect the same, would have interchanged their characters—Satan would have become entirely lovely, and Gabriel detestable—must not he who can believe this doctrine, as easily believe that, if God had willed it, two and

two would have become five? Is it at all easier to believe that truth and falsehood can interchange their natures, than that a square and a circle can interchange theirs?"

7th, We might inquire what is the nature of the will of God? Does that will become good, holy and just, merely because that God willed it should be such; or, is that will excellent in its own nature, independently of any exercise of Almighty volition? If we maintain that the will of God is not excellent in its own nature, but became such by an act of his will, then it clearly follows that "if God had been a being equally malevolent, and by an act of his will had determined that his character should be infinitely excellent, it would of course have become infinitely excellent, and he himself would have deserved to be loved, praised, and glorified for his infinite malice, cruelty, and oppression, just as he now does for his infinite goodness, truth, faithfulness and mercy. According to this scheme, therefore, there is no original moral difference between the characters of an infinitely malevolent being, and an infinitely benevolent one; because this difference depends on a mere act of will, and not at all on the respective natures of the things themselves. That a malevolent being

would have made this determination, there is no more reason to doubt, than that it would be made by a benevolent being; for it cannot be doubted that a malevolent being would have entirely loved and honoured himself. The question whether God is a benevolent or malevolent being, seems therefore to be nugatory, for all our inquiries concerning the subject, which have any practical importance, terminate in this single question,—What has God chosen? ”\*

8th, It is observed by a very learned and ingenious writer, who has devoted a good deal of attention to this subject, but whose language is open to very opposite interpretations, that “the *law of nature* is infinitely superior to all authority of *men*, and independent upon it, so its obligation, primarily and originally, is antecedent also even to this consideration of its being the positive will or command of God himself. For, as the addition of certain numbers necessarily produces a certain sum, and certain geometrical or mechanical operations give a constant and unalterable solution of certain problems or propositions, so in moral mat-

\* See these arguments treated more fully in Dwight's *System of Theology*, vol. iii. p. 427.



ters there are certain necessary and unalterable respects or relations of things, which have not their original from arbitrary and positive constitution, but are of eternal necessity in their own nature. As in matters of sense, the reason why a thing is visible, is not because it is seen, but it is therefore seen because it is visible—so in matters of natural reason and morality, that which is holy and good, is not therefore holy and good because it is commanded to be done, but is therefore commanded of God because it is holy and good. The *existence* indeed of the *things themselves* whose proportions and relations we consider, depends entirely on the *mere arbitrary will and good pleasure of God*, who can create things when he thinks fit. But when things are created, and so long as it pleases God to continue them in being, their *proportions*, which are *abstractly of eternal necessity*, are also in the things themselves *absolutely unalterable*.”\*

It would be acting an unfair and disingenuous part, not to allow that these objections possess great force; indeed some of them may be said to be entirely unanswerable. But in making this

\* Dr. Clarke's Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, p. 216.

concession, we need not be prevented from stating some considerations of a directly opposite nature, which, if they are not calculated to produce absolute conviction, will, at least, induce us to see that this important, but rather abstruse and intricate question, has two different aspects in which it may be viewed.

1. The whole of the arguments which have just now been stated against the principles of Archbishop King's system, hinge upon this assumption, and it is altogether a futile and gratuitous one :—that we, finite and imperfect creatures, can have an adequate and full conception of the nature and attributes of the Deity ; of his creative power, the nature of his moral constitution, and of the final ends or purposes for which he has made the universe, together with us his feeble and dependent creatures.

2. But, waving this objection, which is of great weight, and which must suggest itself to every candid and reverential mind, at the very threshold of this inquiry, let us apply our reasoning to the subject, and we will see that logical difficulties, as numerous, and seemingly insurmountable, will be found in the moral theory,—that the law of morality is *not* obligatory upon us from the consideration of its being the express *will* of God.

3. In saying that the Deity could have no *motive* to create virtue or vice, or to give a preference to the former or to the latter, is to talk after the manner of men ; it is to maintain that God is influenced by something exterior to, or independent of, himself ; for it must always be held in remembrance that we can attach no idea to the word *motive*, but that of foreign influence or force upon the being to whom the motive is directed. If the motive, in this instance, be held to be part of the divine nature, coeval in its existence with his other attributes ; then we may again ask, in what manner, and at what time did this motive begin to manifest itself. If it existed from all eternity, it must have exercised its power from all eternity also. But an eternal motive is an absurdity. A *motive* or *inducement* is something arising out of the *circumstances of the case*. To say that a motive always existed, seems nothing short of a contradiction ; for the word motive invariably means *something arising out of something else* ; and to suppose an infinite series of motives, is preposterous in the extreme, and when pushed to its utmost limits, is alike destructive to the existence of matter, and of the Deity himself.

4. Besides these considerations, it may be observed,

that an eternal, self-created, and infinitely wise and powerful being, must, if we can strain our feeble imaginations to grasp at even a faint conception of the matter, be supposed to be acted upon only by a motive as eternal, self-created, and infinitely as powerful as himself.

5. If a divine motive, if we may so term it, was indispensably necessary to stamp the law of God with moral validity, then this is as much as to say that the obligatory nature of this law owed its sole existence not only to this *something*, which we term a motive, which we must conceive to be external to, and independent of, the Deity himself; but of which *something*, we do not profess to have the smallest conception, and which we consequently have not been able at any time to designate by any appellation whatever.

6. If the law of morality be anterior to, or considered as coeval in point of existence with the Deity himself; then this law becomes obligatory upon us.—We obey its injunctions, not from any considerations of its being his law, or of his creation, but *solely* on account of its being anterior to, or coeval in point of duration with, himself.

7. To say that the duties and obligations of morality are eternal, and that the Deity is obliged

or necessitated to regulate himself by this eternal law, then this is to place this law above himself, and to make him entirely dependent upon it. This supposition is also completely at variance with all our notions, whether philosophical or popular, which we have of law in general; for we cannot maintain that any law can have an existence anterior to, or coeval with, the lawgiver, or framer of the law.

8. If the distinctions between virtue and vice be of the same nature as the truth or falsehood of mathematical axioms and propositions, and if it be true, as affirmed, that the Almighty could not alter the nature of even the simplest truth in the latter branch of human knowledge; then we are led to infer that mathematical evidence is completely independent of his power, and incapable of receiving any alteration or modification from his omnipotence.

9. If we grant that the nature of mathematical evidence could not be affected by the Almighty's power, it is but fair to infer that all other kinds of truth must also partake of the same nature—that is, be independent of the power and will of God; and, as we find from experience that the laws of matter and motion, by which the whole universe is

regulated and upheld, are possessed of the same degree of evidence as that which is ascribed to mathematics ; then we must come to the conclusion, that the universe, as at present constituted, could not have been constituted otherwise ; and that the principles by which the movements of great masses of matter are regulated, as well as the principles which bind together the smallest particles or atoms, must have existed from all eternity.

10. As mathematical truths, and indeed all kinds of truths, are perceived by the mind of man, and bear a certain fixed relation to it ; it does not, in my humble opinion, appear an unwarrantable stretch of assertion, to maintain that it might have pleased the Almighty, and that it was within his power, to have altered the relative connexion, or system of laws which exist between truth in general, and our minds. At any rate, those who maintain that the Almighty had it not in his power to alter the nature of mathematical evidence, must also in consistency maintain, that our minds, by which that truth is perceived, and to which it must be considered to bear a certain and fixed relation, could not have been otherwise made than we find them to be. And, moreover, it may also be remarked, that as there is a certain connexion subsisting between the

nature and operations of our minds, and the nature and operations of our bodies ; it is but fair to presume, that if our minds could not have been altered from what they now are, neither could our bodies, without destroying that concord and mutual harmony of action, which, experience teaches us, do at present subsist between them. With whatever difficulties the position may be attended, there are few persons, I apprehend, who would not readily concede that both our minds and bodies might have been very differently constituted from what they are, if it had so pleased the *will* of the Almighty to have done so.

11. If all moral truths, and truths relating to other branches of human knowledge, be affirmed to be not independent of the will of the Almighty in the absolute meaning of the phrase, but only form part of his *nature* or *essence*, then this view of the matter is precisely the same as that of Spinoza—being founded upon the same principle, and differing only in forms and modes of expression.

12. The arguments which are founded upon an analogy between the way in which the Almighty might be conceived to have seen things, before they were actually created, and imaginary representations of material objects of the mind's conception,

such as a plan of a house, a landscape, &c. are not perfect and complete, and do not in any conceivable manner seem capable of being applied to the Deity. We obtain our imaginary representations from a knowledge of realities, but in the case of the Deity, as here supposed, the moral and physical truths, and their various relations, are represented as having an existence before any thing material or substantial was created. This consideration, trifling as it may at first sight appear to many, does, in my humble conception, destroy at once the whole argument on this point.

13. It would be easy to push these inquiries to a greater length, but probably at the expense of appearing dry and tedious to the generality of readers. On every side in which this interesting question—*whether our moral and religious obligations centre in the will of God, or they do not?* I think the preponderance of rational evidence is in favour of the position that the *will of God* must be the reason why his commands become invested with an obligatory character. There can no possible harm attend the belief of the complete and absolute free-will of the Deity; on the contrary, the opposite hypothesis, that he is not free to act in all things, is full of danger, and must lead, by fair and



legitimate inference, to downright atheism. There is no middle course to steer. We cannot maintain the Almighty to be a necessary Being in some matters, and not in others, without running into absolute absurdity and confusion.

14. The whole of natural and revealed religion may be considered as consisting of two kinds of precepts or commands: the one moral, and the other positive. The former of which we do by natural reason see the fitness and propriety; but the fitness of the latter we do not perceive so clearly, and they become obligatory upon us, solely from being the positive commands of the Deity. Many of the most important doctrines of revelation become objects of faith and principles of action, not on account of any perceivable fitness or congruity in themselves, but solely because they are ordained from heaven. The doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation of Christ, the resurrection of the body, and a day of final judgment, are matters of importance, and objects of interest, not from their appearing *fit* or *reasonable* in their own natures, abstractly considered, but purely because we are told, that God has *willed* these things. I think it is a grievous mistake to imagine that there is any resemblance between the truth of these doctrines,

and the truth of mathematics ; for, in order that we should be able to perceive the fitness or propriety of these doctrines, it would be necessary we should be well and thoroughly acquainted with the whole of the moral government of the Deity. To talk of the fitness or reasonableness of such doctrines, in the same confident and decisive manner as we talk of mathematical relations, it would be necessary we should know just as much as the Deity himself. The only foundation, therefore, for the obligatory nature of his positive commands, of which we can know any thing, is, that they are simply the result of his *will* and *pleasure*.

15. It may also, I think, be fairly maintained, that even the moral precepts of the Almighty do not stand upon any different ground from his positive commands ; nor does there appear to be, at bottom, any arguments for referring the latter to the express *will of God*, which do not equally, and with the same force, apply to the former. Looking, for example, at the nature of the ten commandments, there is nothing in them, abstractly considered,—when viewed apart from the nature of man, and the constitution of the social state—to which they refer, that can induce us to believe that the connexion which subsists between their per-

formance or non-performance, and happiness and comfort, misery and disorder, is of an eternal and immutable description, and is unsusceptible of any modification from the will or power of the Almighty. We might easily imagine that society might have been so constituted, that, going into our neighbour's house and taking away his goods, might have been considered quite a harmless action, and not denominated as the heinous crime of theft. *Why* the connexion was at first established, and still exists between virtue and happiness, vice and misery, no other account can be given, than that it has so pleased God to establish and uphold this connexion; and all the arguments which have, at various times, been brought forward in support of the doctrines of natural religion, and the obligations of morality, are founded, not upon what is conceived by us to be impossible to be constituted otherwise; but upon what we perceive is constituted: not upon abstract speculations on the limited powers of the Deity, but solely on the ground that he has chosen to frame an order of things, which both intimates to us, in some measure, his existence and nature, and at the same time shows us that our interest and duty are connected with a due observance of the laws which emanate from this order

of the world. The foundation for the truth of moral precepts is the same as that for all our other knowledge, excepting that of mathematics. In every law of nature which comes under our observation, we can suppose some alteration or modification of it ; but of the nature of mathematical relations we cannot. This distinction ought always to be duly attended to, whenever we draw any inferences from the nature of mathematical evidence, to that of moral or religious subjects. There is no difficulty in supposing that the earth might have been quite flat, or a perfect square, and been quite stationary, instead of its present globular shape, and its annual and diurnal motions ; or that man might have been made ten times larger than he is, and instead of two eyes he might have had a score. Can we not conceive that many of the principles of matter and motion might have been different ; and the phenomena of capillary attraction might have been observed in a tube of a foot, instead of being limited to that of one-tenth of an inch in diameter ? The laws of electric and magnetic action might, for any thing we can perceive to the contrary, have been quite different from what we find them to be ; and who will say that it would have been impossible to have made any alteration in the laws of chemical

affinity? Might it not have been so constituted that milk and water might have produced a poisonous compound to man, instead of these things forming a wholesome drink? The same remarks may be applied to moral subjects. *Why* the connexion, which we now find, should subsist between virtue and happiness, and vice and misery, we cannot tell, otherwise than by saying that such is the order or constitution of things. It might have been ordered that drinking spirituous liquors, the excessive indulgence of which produces such lamentable effects, might have been attended with as few pernicious consequences as the drinking of water. It might have been so ordered that a blow upon a man's head, which in his present condition would produce instant death, might have been accompanied with the same effects which we experience from the tickling of a straw. In the case of mathematical relations the matter stands somewhat different. Here we *cannot conceive* how two and two can make five or six; nor how the properties of a square should be the same as those of a circle. The principal point insisted upon, for the immutability and eternal nature of mathematical relations, is, that we cannot conceive the contrary of any axiom, *and from this circumstance alone, the proposition*

is affirmed, that even the Deity himself could not alter the nature of these relations. But even if this position were granted, (which I think a very bold one) it could not justify us in inferring that the relations amongst other things could not have been different from what they are found to be. Here the principal circumstance is wanting which induced us to come to this conclusion in mathematics. With respect to the operations of nature, we can easily imagine various alterations and modifications to be effected upon them. The whole constitution of nature ; the numerous physical, moral, and intellectual relations which we observe amongst the multitude of things around us, must always, to our limited capacities, when abstractly considered, appear of an arbitrary character ; nor does a single tittle of the truth or influence of these laws of nature arise, as in the case of mathematics, from an idea that we cannot perceive how these various relations might have been otherwise constituted with regard to one another or to us.

16. It appears to me that the principal cause of the antipathy which has generally been manifested against the doctrine, that morality is founded upon the *will* of God, has been, that upon this hypothesis the Almighty is made the author of sin. But allowing,

for the sake of argument, that such a position may be fairly deducible from this theory of Archbishop King ; yet I should like to know, if there ever was, or can be, any moral theory proposed, that completely sets at rest this long agitated question—the origin of evil. Whatever speculative opinions we may embrace, we will find this question meeting us in the face at every turn ; and though some moral theories do more obviously and directly suggest the question, on the origin of evil, to the mind, than others, yet this question is involved in all theories, and seems incapable of a solution from any. It is a question to which we can never hope to make even the slightest progress towards affording a satisfactory answer, and we must be content to leave it, where every inquisitive mind, after years of toil has been obliged to leave it—just where it was found.

If I am not mistaken, the arguments which are commonly brought forward for the additional obligations which the suggestions of natural morality receive from a direct revelation from heaven, are entirely founded upon the principle, that such a revelation makes known to us more completely and decidedly, *what is the will of the Almighty*. It is allowed on all hands, that certain moral principles

are recognised, and certain moral duties performed by all mankind, merely from the light of nature herself, but it is maintained, and I think properly enough, that the Scriptures unfold these principles more simply and clearly to our view, and enforce the performance of these duties with a greater weight of moral obligation ; and for these reasons the sacred writings are justly considered of paramount importance. But the fact of man's moral duty being revealed from above, can be turned to no profitable purpose by those who adopt the opinion, that virtue is immutable in the absolute sense of the word, and coeval with the existence of the Deity himself. The reason of this is plain.— This immutability, this constitutional fitness of things, which is said to constitute the essence or abstract nature of virtue, *is not made more apparent by a revelation than without one.* We are taught by nature to pay, in some degree at least, a portion of respect to the lives and properties of our fellow-men ; and the duties which these moral suggestions make known to us, involve certain moral relations which are said to be of an eternal and immutable description, which the Almighty never had, nor never can have, any power to alter or modify in the smallest degree. Now, granting this for a



moment to be correct, may we not be allowed to ask in what degree can this eternal and immutable character, which these virtues here alluded to possess, be rendered more apparent to our perceptions by the Scriptures merely announcing to us, that we are not to commit murder, and are not to steal? If I am induced from my natural constitution to feel a certain emotion of pity when distress of any kind is presented to my mind, the eternal fitness or propriety of this feeling is not in the slightest degree made more apparent, or different in its nature to us, by the mere circumstance, that we are commanded by God to be kind and compassionate to the weak and distressed? The only additional force which such announcements can confer, is merely from a consideration, that these commands proceed immediately from the mouth of the author of our being,—that this visible manifestation of his existence and attributes points out more directly and plainly, that such and such duties it is *His will* and pleasure we should perform.

It may also be worthy of remark here, that if moral distinctions were of the same nature as mathematical truths, then no revelation could possibly impart any additional degree of evidence to them, for they would be as perfect from the mere sugges-

tions of the understanding, as they could be from any written or verbal declaration respecting them, of whatever nature that declaration might be. It would not have rendered the truth more forcible or more readily perceived, or in any degree added to its eternal or immutable nature, if it had formed part of the moral law, that man were to believe that three and three made nine, or that a square is not a circle. The case would stand precisely the same with respect to all moral distinctions, if these distinctions were allowed to be of precisely the same nature as mathematical truths, eternal and immutable, coeval with the Deity himself, and whose nature, it is contended, he can neither curtail, enlarge, or modify, not even in the smallest tittle.

But it may be objected to what is here stated, that the reason why revelation adds so powerfully to the force of natural moral obligation is, that a future life, and rewards and punishments are thereby made known to us exclusively through this channel; and these form powerful incentives to moral rectitude and true piety. But these rewards and punishments can do nothing more than add a certain portion of strength to these moral motives and inducements which are established by the constitution of nature, and which are acknowledged,

on all hands, to be completely independent of revelation. The Scriptures do not alter the nature of that moral evidence which we derive from the exercise of our various faculties, and from our station in the scale of social existence; they only strengthen that evidence where it is feebly given, and direct, modify, and apply it to purposes of a lofty and ennobling character.

The salutary influence, then, which a revealed religion exercises over our moral characters must arise, not from any change it effects in moral relations abstractedly considered, but in making those relations more attended to by us, as inducing men to look upon them as being purely and simply *the will of God*, and as becoming invested with additional obligation by reason of his command.

All the arguments in favour of Christianity, drawn from what are termed its external evidences, do merely express thus much,—that such and such things are commanded to be done or to be avoided; and that certain rewards and punishments are attached to these actions, and these commands and arrangements of Providence proceed from the *will and desire of the Most High*. Writers on the external evidences tell us, in substance, that of the fitness or unfitness, the propriety or impropriety of

the doctrines and duties found in the Scriptures, we are not at liberty to speak, nor whether the important object of a revelation might or might not have been accomplished in any other manner than we find it to have been. The question is, can we bring forward a sufficient portion of evidence to show that the Bible is the word of God, and was sent to man to be a rule for his conduct? if this can be answered in the affirmative, then all the objections which may be urged against any particular doctrines or precepts contained therein, upon the ground that we cannot by *our reason* sufficiently comprehend the one, or perceive the utility of the other, must necessarily fall to the ground; and the seemingly objectionable matter must remain as strictly obligatory upon us to believe and practise as other doctrines and precepts which appear more level to our understandings; and for this sole reason, that we find what is above our reason to be contained in the Scriptures, which are defined to be the *revealed will* of God to *man*.

Having, in the former part of this chapter, alluded to the writings of Dr. Edwards and Dr. Dwight, I may be allowed, though somewhat out of place, to mention, that both these distinguished men have published theories of morality; in which

theories they seem both to have been duly sensible of the vast importance of free-will, and how necessary it was to have proper conceptions of this freedom, before we could be in a state to determine what share of praise or blame we ought to dispense to different moral or immoral actions. I consider the testimony of these writers as very important, not so much for its own sake, as from the circumstance that they appear in this inquiry in the character of reluctant witnesses; and their extorted evidence is not so much to be judged of by its literal as by its implied meaning. Dr. Edwards observes, that "It is not *all* beauty that is called virtue; for instance, not the beauty of a building, of a flower, or of the rainbow; but some beauty belonging to beings that have *perception* and *will*." "And perhaps it is needless for me to give notice to my readers, that when I speak of an intelligent being having a heart united, and benevolently disposed to being in general, I thereby mean intelligent being in general; not inanimate things, or beings that have no *perception* or *will*, which are not capable objects of benevolence."\* Here the Doctor maintains, there can be no moral virtue without the

\*. Jonathan Edwards' Works, vol. ii. p. 9, 10.

faculty of perceiving a thing, and the *will* to guide and direct that faculty. With the correctness or soundness of his theory of morals, (which, as far as I can understand it, seems to be the same in principle as that of my Lord Shaftsbury), I have nothing to do here; only it is quite obvious, that Dr. Edwards found he could not advance a single step in the elucidation of his views on the nature of virtue, without laying down as a preliminary principle the freedom of the will.

Dr. Dwight's moral theory is, that utility is the foundation of virtue; and he observes, that "It is hardly necessary to say, that *involuntary beings* can of themselves produce nothing, as being absolutely inactive; and that there are no *active beings* besides those which are *voluntary*." "In what does the excellence of virtue consist? In this, that it is the voluntary cause of happiness." "Minds are active only by means of the power of *willing*." \* These quotations will teach us how impossible it is for moral writers to make themselves understood without the taking with them the freedom of the *will*.

\* Dwight's System of Theology, vol. iii. p. 435.

## CHAPTER VIII.

ON WHAT ARE TERMED THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES, AND ON THE ANALOGY BETWEEN THE POWER OF THE WILL AND OUR MORAL AND MENTAL NATURES.

---

I THINK it will be found, upon close examination, that the words, *intelligence, wisdom, mind, talent*, and others of a synonymous meaning, which are employed to denote those qualities of our mental constitution which call forth our admiration and esteem, are expressive of the power of *voluntary* action only. Any thing like compulsion, necessity, or mechanical agency, seem at variance with our common notions of mental superiority or intellectual worth. We suppose the mind to contain *within itself* the principle or cause of its own activity; and to do *what we please*, or what we *have a mind to do*, is language simply declaratory

of that attribute of our nature which constitutes us rational and intelligent beings.

Though mankind may, in some measure, consider genius to be the gift of nature, yet when they bestow praise upon great talents and mental acquirements, they nevertheless seem to do so in consideration of these superior mental excellencies being under the complete authority and control of the individual. Our familiar and common language is very expressive upon this point. We say a man has *no mind* of his own, when he seems to be influenced more by the counsels and opinions of others, than by the original and voluntary efforts of his own understanding, even though these counsels and opinions be really good and correct of themselves. The term, *independent mind*, is also employed to denote a mind that is, in a great measure, free from the influence of other minds; which views principles and systems with, as it were, its own eyes; and which does not, in general, give its assent to the truth of propositions by implicit dictation, but from individual and personal examination. Amongst that part of mankind who cultivate literature with the laudable desire of exciting the esteem and commanding the respect of their neighbours, or the world at large, nothing is guarded



with more jealousy than this independence of mind ; and their constant desire is to show, that they owe more to their own exertions than to the instruction and influence of others. When the opinions and views of other persons exercise an entire and exclusive influence over us, and when that influence is *perceived*, then we can never hope to enjoy literary fame or renown.

How vastly important to our welfare and happiness are the endowments of the memory, yet they bear no comparison, in our estimation, to those of the understanding. Hence we hear the trite remark, that many persons complain of the badness of their memories, but that we hear few complain of the weakness of their judgments. To acknowledge this latter imperfection wounds their pride, because it derogates from their importance and respect. Again, “ *a grain of reason is worth a ton of memory.*” The foundation of these common remarks is, that memory is considered to be principally a *passive power* ; to partake of something like mechanical agency, and not to be so materially subject to the influence of the will, or voluntary power, as the understanding is. The praise we bestow upon a quick, powerful, and comprehensive judgment, is of a much higher and loftier character

than that which is bestowed upon a strong and tenacious memory.

In the art of oratory we admire and praise the man who delivers a long, eloquent, and instructive discourse to his audience ; and the coolness and self-possession he displays, also claim a portion of our admiration and esteem. Let us be told, however, that the discourse he has delivered is not his own composition, but that it had been composed by another person, and the speaker had only committed it to memory, our applause, on learning this piece of intelligence, will be considerably lessened ; we will no longer praise him for having all his knowledge so methodically arranged in his mind, and clothed in appropriate language, which he appears to have so completely under the command of his will. That portion of our approbation which arises from the conception we form to ourselves, that while he is speaking, he has all the faculties of his mind, judgment, reasoning, wit, and imagination, under his government, and that he artfully brings them into exercise, and seems to attend to them all at one time as jugglers do with their balls, immediately vanishes when we know that he is reduced in the scale of intelligence to a mere reciter of speeches, instead of being the author of them.

There is no one who has been in the habit of attending public places where extemporaneous oratory is practised, but who must have noticed the great difference in the effect produced upon the audience by an extemporary speech, from one which is read from a paper or book. The reason of this is, I apprehend, that we have not such a good security that the person who reads a speech to us did really make it, as if he delivered it off-hand. The powers of the will are not here so obviously brought into play. If it should be even supposed by the audience that the speaker has taken a long time to prepare his harangue, it lessens him in our estimation, as we imagine, and with justice, that by long pondering over his subject, and formally committing it to memory, he may have been indebted to many incidental circumstances which might lessen the influence of the will. Hence it is that in public debates, we admire a speaker who gives us a ready reply upon the spur of the moment, to a speech which was formally and studiously delivered, and which bears internal evidence of its having been long thought about, and got up, as it is technically termed, with great care.

Upon the same principle we admire quick and smart replies, repartees, and poetical impromptus,

because they show, in a more than usually striking manner, the great power the will of the individual has over the intellectual powers, and acquired information, which are, in a general way, necessary to produce these light and pleasant effusions.

In music the case is precisely similar. We hear the sound of the organ at our door, and we feel a pleasure in the combination of musical notes; but we never think of lavishing praise upon the man who mechanically turns the handle of the instrument, though he may be said to be the immediate cause of the sweet sounds we hear. And I think there can be no doubt but our pleasure would be very materially diminished were we to hear a piece of music, such, for example, as Handel's Creation, performed solely by mechanical contrivances, even if all the parts were executed in as accurate and melodious a manner as we have them in these musical festivals, which are composed of the best vocal and instrumental performers in the kingdom. The music produced from such means as are here supposed would not raise our feelings above the point of complacency—so necessary is it that the innate resources of the mind itself should be supposed to be exerted, before we can receive intellectual gra-

tification, or bestow praise on those agents which confer it.

Were the finest poetry subjected to, or rather created by, purely mechanical rules and contrivances, it would be deprived of the principal source of pleasing us. If the lofty imaginations, the sublime ideas, the beautiful imagery, and the smoothness of the verse, did not presuppose a vigorous exercise of the will of the poet, what is usually called poetry, no matter on what subjects employed, would excite little or no attention among mankind. The rules of versification, or what is termed the mechanical part of poetry, though of the greatest use for enabling us to express our poetical ideas in an engaging and proper manner, are nevertheless productive of little praise to the poet, merely because they are mechanical, and are not supposed to require any great effort of the will.

There is no art which owes so much to the principle of voluntary agency as that of poetry. The poet, placed in the temple of nature, gives life and vitality to every thing around him. He holds an intercourse, and keeps up a constant sympathy with all nature's works; and the woods and the groves, the mountains and the vallies, the mighty waters and the rippling streams, the clouds and the air,

and the orbs which emblazon the canopy of heaven, are endowed with speech, and are made to see, to hear, to desire, to rejoice, and to be grateful, and to exercise all the functions of rational and moral agents. It is from this principle, and this alone, that poetry owes every thing which can charm the ear and animate the bosom. It is this art of personification which furnishes the poet with all his splendid imagery and fascinating illustrations, by which he bewitches his readers with the smiles of the vallies, the blushes and whispers of the woods, and the transporting accents of love which drop from the waterfall. It is this art of clothing inanimate things with the powers of perception and voluntary agency, which furnishes the pleasure and delight we feel in reading true poetry ; such, for example, as that which we find in many places in Scripture, when it is said that “ the earth was full of the goodness of the Lord ; the sea roared, and the fulness thereof ; the floods clapped their hands before the Lord, the mountains trembled at his presence ; ” “ the little hills rejoiced on every side ; ” “ the pastures shouted for joy ; ” “ the wilderness and the solitary place was glad ; the desert rejoiced, and blossomed as the rose, it blossomed abundantly, and rejoiced even with joy and sing-

ing.”—“The mountains saw thee, and they trembled; the overflowing of the waters passed by; the deep uttered his voice, and lift up his hands on high.” (Hab. ch. iii. v. 10.)—“O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest and be still.” (Jer. ch. xlvii. v. 6.—In the second book of Samuel, where David, hearing of the death of Saul and Jonathan, in the height of his grief calls for vengeance upon the mountains of Gilboa. Many hundreds of passages of the same kind might be taken from the sacred writings.

We find this principle of personification carried to a great length by eminent poets of all ages and countries. In the fifth book of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, he describes Adam and Eve, in their morning thanksgiving to the Almighty, calling upon the sun, the moon, the stars, the elements, the mists and exhalations, the plants, the winds and fountains, to join them to swell the note of praise to their common creator. The affecting instance, also, in Shakspeare’s *King Lear*, is another proof, out of many, which might be produced, of the fine effect of personification, where the monarch, in the midst of a storm, exclaims—

“ Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters;  
I tax not you, ye elements, with unkindness;  
I never gave you kingdoms; call'd you children;  
You owe me no subscription; why then let fall  
Your horrible pleasure?”

This principle in our nature which induces us to carry on an important intercourse with animate and inanimate nature, is of a very extensive application; and, though really constituting all that we denominate poetry, it is not exclusively confined to that noble art, but pervades all our every-day thoughts and common conversational language. It is from this source that untutored man

“ Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the winds,”

and fills the woods and the groves with fairies, genii, and demons. It is also the foundation of all heathen deities, and superstitious rites and ceremonies, among mankind.

Every one who has read Pope's “*Rape of the Lock*,” will readily own that the whole pleasure which we derive from that fascinating piece of poetry, may be attributed solely to the proper application of this principle of personification. In his Messiah, also, where he versifies the language of Isaiah, he furnishes us with a beautiful example of



the pleasure we feel from giving life and volition to inanimate things—

“ See nature hastes her earliest wreaths to bring,  
 With all the incense of the breathing spring ;  
 See lofty Lebanon his head advance,  
 See nodding forests on the mountains dance ;  
 See spicy clouds from lowly Sharon rise,  
 And Carmel’s flowery top perfumes the skies !  
 Hark ! a glad voice the lonely desert cheers,  
 Prepare the way ! a God, a God appears !  
 A God, a God ! the vocal hills reply ;  
 The rocks proclaim th’ approaching Deity.  
 Lo, earth receives him from the bending skies ;  
 Sink down ye mountains, and ye vallies rise ;  
 With heads declin’d, ye cedars, homage pay ;  
 Be smooth, ye rocks ; ye rapid floods give way !”

From these instances, we may perceive the universality of this principle of human nature, to invest even inanimate things with the properties and attributes of our minds and moral constitution. It is not a *necessary*, nor *forced*, nor *constrained* action which excites our sympathy, and calls forth our praise ; this would be truly destructive of every thing like poetical grandeur and sublimity ; but we clothe these objects of imagery with *voluntary power*. We invest them with all the properties of moral agents, and we describe them as rejoicing, and weeping, and singing, just because they possess

within themselves the power and *will* to rejoice, to weep, and to sing;—in this consists the whole charm of personification. The deceptive process which exercises such an unlimited power over our opinions, sentiments, and feelings, is entirely founded upon this principle: That to make the objects of nature interesting, we must attribute to them something distinct from mere matter, and remove them, in our conceptions, as far as possible from any thing of a really inanimate and mechanical nature.

The importance of machinery of every description to the happiness of men individually, and to the power and wealth of a state, is pretty generally acknowledged; but, independent of the value of such contrivances for the saving of labour, the lustre they reflect upon the inventive powers of the human mind is very great indeed. But, notwithstanding these considerations, the objects of machinery would make but very sorry imagery for a poem; and the man who would invoke the assistance and sympathy of fly-wheels, boilers, and pistons, would be looked upon fitter for Bedlam, than to be placed upon the list of poets. The reason of this is obvious. He could not by any effort of imagination, clothe these things with the attributes of *volition*, which we know the moment we are made acquainted with their names, are the result of me-

chanical contrivance and skill. It is not that the objects of machinery are destitute of interest to man that they become unfit objects for imagery ; for, in this respect, they are vastly more valuable than many of the things which constitute the materials of poetical beauty, but solely, because it would appear preposterous in us to look upon them as *voluntary agents*, when we always know that they must work by our own contrivance, and the moving power is always that which we ourselves employ.

My friend gives me a correct account of many branches of knowledge, all of them of great importance to every individual of the species. He delivers what he says with correctness and propriety, and I have the opportunity of benefiting largely from his kind and agreeable communications. I come to learn, that all he has told me he took from an author, word for word, which fell in his way accidentally. The praise I confer upon my friend is very slender to that which I bestow upon the author ; and the plain reason why I make this difference is, that there has been no intellectual effort excited—no power of the will called into action, like that which we suppose in the case of the author of the book.

If a man could obtain all the acquired knowledge

which the civilized world could furnish, and could carry it about with him, and deliver it to others in precisely the same state as he found it from the labours of others, he would scarcely deserve the name of a man of genius. He would want that characteristic mark, originality, which we suppose is more directly under the influence of the will than any other intellectual quality.

When we perceive a man execute any intellectual achievement which commands general admiration and applause ; such for instance, as a fine picture, a noble piece of statuary, or a fine poem ; and when we come to know that such a work has been accomplished under very untoward and unfavourable circumstances, such as extreme poverty, the distractions of general business, the pressing and immediate cares resulting from a numerous family, or the want of a proper and liberal education, all of which would leave his will less free ; we never fail, under such circumstances as here supposed, to award a higher portion of praise to such a person than we would otherwise do, had he enjoyed all the advantages which flow from pecuniary independence, great leisure, and a systematic and enlightened education. Here we regulate our admiration upon this principle, that in the one case, a much greater effort of

the will is necessary to contend against, and overcome the extraneous or accidental discouraging inconveniences than in the other, where nothing seemed to stand in the way between the mind and the subject on which it was employed.

The different degrees and kinds of mental endowments and defects may be accounted for by the same general law which operates in our moral constitution. Indeed there will be found to be a very striking analogy between the way in which we learn to become morally good, and the way by which we arrive at intellectual eminence, independent of the consideration that we estimate both our moral and mental qualifications by the same standard—that of the will. The argument on this head might be greatly extended, but it would lead us to be more metaphysical than the nature of this subject will admit.

Without entering into any lengthened discussion on the nature of our minds, it may be remarked here, that the will has a great influence over the train of our ideas is clearly apparent, both from the authority of many able expounders of our mental nature, as well as from our individual experience. What goes under the common denomination of originality of thought, which is reckoned one of the

principal attributes of a man of genius, is almost entirely dependent upon the strength of the will. Where this is weak or defective, it is in vain we look for strong, original, or vigorous conceptions. Every thing from such a source becomes puny, insignificant, and common-place. If we attend closely to the phenomena of thought, the cause of this will appear more manifest. When a man sits down to study, or to compare any thing which requires a moderate degree of intellectual exertion, he must endeavour to banish from his attention every extraneous and wandering conception, by a steady and vigorous effort of his will ; otherwise he will never be able to think or to write any thing valuable on the subject under consideration, nor make any advances on the discoveries of others. How necessary a habit of this kind is to a mathematician, for example, must appear evident to every one who has the slightest acquaintance with even the elements of his science. If he do not keep a firm hold of his problem, but allow his mind to wander, and his attention to be distracted, he can never advance a single step in the demonstration ; so that his progress in this department of human study, may be justly said to keep pace, both in rapidity and in extent, with the original strength and vigour of his will.

If we look a little more narrowly into the matter, we will find that our advancement in every branch of human learning almost entirely depends upon the exercise and vigour of our wills. So much is this the case, and so frequently has it been noticed by philosophers, that some of them (and Helvetius is amongst the number) consider genius as nothing else but a fixed and exclusive attention paid to any given subject for a certain length of time. There is no one who has paid even common attention to the intellectual history of men of eminence in literature or philosophy, but must have remarked how much their success and fame have arisen from a patient endurance of labour and a steady and concentrated attention to their subject. The historian must pay the most scrupulous and religious attention to order and method in the arrangement of his materials; and he must wage, in his own mind, perpetual warfare against the suggestions of waywardness and inattention. The philosopher must also, when he is examining and expounding matters of great intricacy and subtilty, keep constantly on his guard against the intrusion of ideas unconnected with his subject; otherwise he will never be able to pursue these fine threads of thought, or to seize and unfold those almost

evanescent mental elements, which must constitute the foundation of his success and reputation. Indeed it will be found that in every department of study, if success is to be obtained, and distinction earned, we must keep up a constant and rigid discipline over our thoughts, and acquire the art of viewing our intellectual positions on every side, and banishing whatever unconnectedly obtrudes itself upon the mind. Even the poet, who may at first sight seem to be more independent of the powers of the will, by his dealing in imaginary and fictitious representations, must nevertheless bow to the authority of voluntary agency ; and be continually upon his guard in culling out those sentiments and images of grandeur, beauty, and pathos, from what is ridiculous, mean, and bombastical.

It may also be worthy of remark here, that the difference between men of study and reflection and men of the world, arises from the different degrees of strength in their wills ; and this may be sufficient to account for the diversity of intellectual attainments and habits of the two classes. A man of study has a great command over the current of his thoughts ; he seems to have the power of arresting them at pleasure, to make them objects of his attention, and to use them as instruments for further mental dis-



coveries: but men of the world are unable to check the train of their ideas, or to attend to any one object or pursuit a sufficient length of time, so as to be able to understand or comprehend it. Distracted with business, amused with trifles, and dissipated by pleasure, they have no firm hold of their own minds, no power of keeping up a fixed or continued attention. Hence their conversation becomes uninteresting and frivolous to persons of cultivated and intelligent minds, and they ramble from one subject to another without ever seeming to understand the merits of any.

When we look over the numerous metaphysical theories, we are struck with the important station which the will, or voluntary powers of the mind, occupies in the estimation of the expounders of our mental frames. Here the necessity which philosophers have been under to give real *spontaneity*, or a *self-regulating principle* to the mind, is strikingly exemplified. They cannot advance a single step in their progress, nor unite two sentences together intelligibly without the power of volition. Whatever differences there may be amongst their various theories in matters of detail, they are all material and immaterial hypotheses, obliged to take some self-regulating principle with them for their guide, and

which principle they can trace no further than to the mind itself. Father Malanbranche maintains the mind to be an unextended, immaterial, and simple substance; but possessing two faculties or powers, namely the *understanding* and the *will*.\* In Leibnitz's Theory of the Universe, he felt himself obliged to give to his *monades*, or ultimate atoms of matter, perception and intelligence, before he could mould his views into any thing like an intelligible or consistent system.† And his disciple, M. Wolf, though he denied perception to *monades* in general, could not however deny that perception or intelligence to the monades or atoms of the souls of men.

Amongst the metaphysicians of our own country, we find precisely the same notions as to the necessity of endowing the mind with something like a

\* "L'esprit de l'homme, n'étant point matériel, ou étendu, est sans doute une substance simple, et sans aucune composition de parties: mais cependant on a coutume de distinguer en lui deux facultés, savoir, l'entendement et la volonté." *Recherche de la Vérité*, liv. i. chap. i.

† "Il y a donc dans chaque monade une force qui est le principe de tous les changemens qui lui arrivent, ou de toutes les perceptions qu'elle éprouve, et on peut définir la substance, ce qui a en soi le principe de ses changemens." *Candillec Traité des Systèmes*, vol. iii. p. 147.

self-regulating power. Mr. Locke maintains, like Malanbranche, two distinct faculties, the *understanding* and the *will*; and in his chapter on *power*, he affirms that the only source from which we can derive the most correct notions of *active power*, is from our own *spirit* or *mind*.\* In the views of those eminent writers who have succeeded him, we find the opinions as to the *spontaneity* of the mind essentially the same. Those who have differed from Locke, seem to me to have done so principally because his theory had too much of a *mechanical* complexion about it. His resolving all the operations of the mind into sensation and reflection, appeared to his opponents to savour too much of material philosophy; and hence it is that we have Dr. Reid's numerous ultimate principles or powers, Professor Stewart's *natural resources of the human mind*, and Dr. Brown's intellectual law of *suggestion*; all of which systems are founded upon, and directly recognise the principle, that the only notions we can form of mind or spirit is something which contains *within itself* the production of its own faculties and movements.

In the *ideal* system of Bishop Berkeley we find

\* Essay on the Human Understanding, vol. iii.

this position explicitly and unconditionally laid down. He says, " but besides all that endless variety of ideas or objects of knowledge, there is likewise something which perceives them, and exercises divers operations, as *willing*, imagining, remembering about them. This *perceiving*, *active* being is what I call *mind*, *spirit*, *soul*, *myself*. By which words I do not denote any one of my ideas, but *a thing entirely distinct from them*, wherein they exist, or, which is the same thing, whereby they are perceived, for the existence of an idea consists in its being perceived." " A spirit is one simple, undivided, *active* being ; as it perceives ideas, it is called the *understanding*, and as it produces or otherwise operates about them, it is called the *will*." " There are spiritual substances, minds, or human souls which *will* or excite ideas in themselves at pleasure." " For by the word *spirit* we mean only that which thinks, *wills*, and perceives ; and this, and this alone, constitutes the signification of that term." " But it will be objected, that if there is no idea signified by the terms *soul*, *spirit*, and *substance*, they are wholly insignificant or have no meaning in them. I answer, these words do mean or signify a *real thing*,

which is neither an idea, or like an idea, but that which perceives ideas, and *wills* and reasons about them.”\*

The only system of mental philosophy which openly and unconditionally denies the existence of any thing like *spontaneity* in the mind, is the vibratory, or automatic system of Dr. Hartley. But even here we find the Doctor reduced to a sad dilemma—that of having to take for granted the very principle which his whole book aims to subvert. It was a comparatively easy task for him to make the whole man vibrate from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet; to give the sense of hearing a shake, the sense of touch a shake, and the sense of smelling a shake; but the principal difficulty which puzzled the Doctor was, where did this first and perpetual moving power *reside* or *arise from*? Here the Doctor was obliged to take something for granted. He says, “Thus I suppose or *postulate*, in my first proposition, that sensations arise in the soul from motions excited in the medullary substance of the brain.”† The brain is here constituted the centre

\* Bishop Berkley's *Principles of Human Knowledge*, pp. 24, 36, 40, 96.

† Hartley on Man, vol. i. p. 526.

of all sensation and reflection, and by the innate impulse of this medullary substance the whole man is set in motion, and all the principles, habits, and sentiments of his whole nature, are, by this simple gratuitous principle, attempted to be accounted for.

It may also be worthy of remark here, that the fact must be well known to all those who are tolerably acquainted with the writings which have opposed the opinions of Dr. Hartley, that the principal arguments that are brought forward against him, are founded purely upon a great dislike to any thing which savours of mechanical contrivance when applied to the mind. The doctrine of vibrations, from the great resemblance or analogy which is supposed to exist between it and the various machines in use amongst men, has always been viewed with suspicion, and, at best, been only considered as a very bold attempt to identify the nature and operation of two things, mind and matter, which man, in almost all ages, have been obliged, from the mere force of circumstances, to consider as two very different substances. It is from this opinion, feeling, or if you will, prejudice, that philosophers have at all times felt a great reluctance even to pay common atten-

tion to any attempts which have been made to identify the laws of the immaterial part of our nature with the laws of matter, or subject the former to the rules of mechanical philosophy.

It cannot have escaped the notice of those who have looked into the material systems which do either directly, or by implication, deny the existence of an all-wise and intelligent first cause, how these mechanical theorists have puzzled and bewildered themselves and others, by their attempts to make mind or thought a property of matter, and by stripping it of that self-regulating principle, which nature herself seems to induce us to consider as the indispensable attribute of mind or spirit. The definitions of matter usually given by these reasoners is a proof of this. The various quibblings, shufflings, reservations, and qualifications, the class of writers here alluded to have recourse to in unfolding and laying down their views and principles, must be abundantly evident to every one who has ever looked into their theories; but to point out a peculiar specimen of this tortuous logic arising from the attempt to take from mind its spontaneity, I refer the reader to the first ten propositions of Spinoza's system, as I do not,

for various reasons, think proper to quote them here.

From these few remarks on metaphysical theories, we may clearly perceive, that though they differ widely from each other in matters of detail, and have been brought forward to give countenance and support to various different moral and religious systems, yet these theories all recognise, in one shape or another, the principle that the mind, without the power of *willing* or of being the author of its own exertions, would cease to have any distinguishing mark from mere matter. It would perhaps be a very difficult thing to give a logical or satisfactory account of the origin of this prevailing opinion, other than this, that we are so constituted, that we cannot think otherwise of the operations of our own intellectual natures; and so closely interwoven is this opinion with subjects of the deepest interest to us all, that I think we ought to avoid, as much as possible, all attempts to weaken it; but, on the contrary, rely with implicit confidence in its truth, and look upon it as one of those primary suggestions of the author of our being, which may be safely followed whithersoever it may lead us.



Even those physiological inquiries which have been at various times entered into and published to the world, not with any direct or immediate view to bear upon the usual disquisitions of mental philosophy, but principally for the purpose of showing the intimate connexion which subsists between certain forms of matter and motion, and certain intellectual states or qualifications, in order that wholesome rules might be framed for the health of both body and mind ; I say that systems which have been written with this view have at all times been objects of suspicion, and their moral tendency has, on numerous occasions, been called in question. The reasons why these unfavourable impressions have so generally prevailed against such speculations, seem to me to be that they have been always conceived to have a direct tendency to assimilate mind and matter, and to lay the foundation for the opinion that mind might, in some unperceived manner to us, be only a property or modification of matter. And it may parenthetically be noticed here, that in the very modern science of phrenology, we may observe the operation of that principle of our nature which is so hostile to every attempt to materialize the mind, even in the smallest degree—that if we examine the arguments of those

who have written against it, and the reasons with which those arguments have been met by the advocates of the science, we cannot fail to perceive that there is a strong feeling against the system just on account of its material tendency. I do not state this with a view of disparaging this study in the smallest degree, for I must confess myself but partially acquainted with the principles of Doctors Gall and Spurzheim, and of their ingenious disciples. I only wish to state the feeling there is against the system, and the ground on which I conceive that feeling rests. When certain mental qualifications, and moral dispositions, are meant to be traced to certain organs, states, or conditions of the brain, the obvious inference which people in general will draw, will be, that these mental and moral qualifications are merely the effects resulting from the material constitution of the organs to which they are respectively referred; and as mankind can be supposed to have but very little influence over their own organic conformation, there does appear a *seeming* tendency in the science under review to materialize our mind and moral affections, to countenance the doctrine of fatality, and to shake the foundations of moral and intellectual responsibility, by inducing us to believe that

our mental powers, and moral dispositions, are the result of an organization over which we have no control—And I have no hesitation in saying that that objection, on the score of the material tendency of phrenological speculations, will always prove the most formidable against them, and will confine their influence within very narrow limits indeed. Mankind have such an unconquerable aversion to every thing which has the most distant appearance of weakening their belief in their mind's spontaneity, or active principle, that they will never generally embrace any speculations, how ingenious and refined soever they may be, or under whatever name or garb they may appear, which have even only an *apparent* tendency to make them believe that they are mere mechanical creatures, and act from the impulse of material necessity.

There is a kind of artifice we employ when we speak of our minds as the sole source of all mental exertion—that of transferring the power of volition from the will, and placing it, for the time being, in some one or more of the other general faculties of the mind. We express this act by such phrases as the following: “ By the sagacious *perception* of the course his antagonist intended to take, he parried the anticipated attack,” &c. “ By the

power of his *reason* he regulated his will and desires." "The whole powers of his mind were under the control of a vigorous and cultivated *imagination*." In these, and many other similar instances which might be adduced, we seem to strip the will of all voluntary power, and represent ourselves under the complete influence of that faculty which we make, for the moment, the predominant one. We have here *perception*, *reason*, and *imagination*, respectively made the ruling power of the mind; but in all these instances we have here given, it is always understood by us that the will is under no real restraint, that she makes a voluntary delegation, so to speak, of her authority and influence, and in no instance do we for a moment conceive that the moving power of mind is placed in any thing external to the man himself, or to that which we denominate his mind or intellectual faculties. To suppose the moving power of the mind resided in any thing but in the mind itself, would be destructive of the very essence of mental existence. When we reason about, or speak of the mind of the Deity, we employ a similar artifice, and express our meaning in the same kind of language which we use when speaking of the various active powers or faculties of our minds.

It appears to me, that there is a great similarity between the disputes relative to the freedom of the human mind, and those controversies which have in later years existed about the reality of the material world,—both as to their nature, and the mode in which they have been conducted. It must, I think, be conceded on all hands, that the ideal theory of *Berkley* and *Hume* has never yet received any thing like a *logical* refutation. We have not, *by a chain of argumentation*, been able to prove that there is any thing in nature besides the ideas and impressions of our own minds or thinking principle. The reality of the material universe rests upon a powerful but mere suggestion of nature, and is not, nor ever can be, considered in the light of an object of belief to which we arrive by philosophical demonstration. We believe in the existence or reality of external things; we believe that the lands, and houses, and ships, and friends, and relations, have a positive reality as well when they are objects of our immediate perception, as when they are not perceived by us. We believe all this; and in every moment of our life does this belief actuate our conduct both as it respects ourselves and others; nor can we practically set aside this conviction without making our-

selves perfectly ridiculous, if not totally destroying our existence. Yet we do not reason ourselves into this belief, nor do we employ reason to establish the same belief in others. It is perfectly well known that the *idealist* has decidedly the advantage, considered in the light of a mere *reasoner*. His system is protected in a way that no logical attacks can injure or destroy it. This Dr. Reid, its most zealous and able opponent, knew and acknowledged, and the whole of his writings, as well as those of others who have followed his steps on this subject, are grounded upon this simple and concise principle—that the existence of material objects is suggested to us by a universal and primary law of our nature, which we can neither account for, nor counteract, by any process of mere reasoning.

The question respecting the liberty of the human will has been discussed in nearly the same manner as the ideal philosophy. The leading features of both controversies are essentially the same. The notion of free agency is, I conceive, like our idea of material existence—a general suggestion of nature; but at the same time a suggestion liable, from its very essence, to logical objections of a similar character to those

which have been usually brought against the reality of external things. There is one point, however, in which the controversies differ, and it is this—that the opponents of Berkeley and Hume's doctrine grounded their arguments upon the simple position that the reality of the material world was an elementary law—an ultimate principle—a suggestion of nature, universally acknowledged and interwoven with all our language, sentiments, and opinions, and therefore, inaccessible to logical attacks; but the advocates of free-will, in many cases, mistook the nature of the principle they advanced and advocated. Instead of carrying on a defensive, they opened an offensive warfare upon their enemies; and fancied they were able to prove by pure demonstration, that the will was always perfectly and absolutely free in all its actions. Here some of the most able assertors of liberty committed a most grievous error; for, by taking this lofty position, they exposed themselves to the merciless attacks of their opponents, who really seemed to have the decided advantage over them, so far as *mere reasoning* was concerned.

It may also be noticed here, that those who are generally acquainted with the controversy upon necessity and free-will, know, that between those ar-

guments, founded upon wit and ridicule, which have frequently been brought against necessity, and those advanced against the ideal system, there is the most perfect resemblance, and both idealist and necessarian have at all times exhibited a disposition to be more readily ridiculed out of their principles than reasoned out of them.

The distinction which has universally been admitted to subsist between man and the other beings of animated nature, is principally founded upon the superiority of his mind—and that superiority consists in the possession of spontaneity—or a self-regulating principle. Whatever speculations philosophers have indulged in respecting the affinity between the instinct of animals and the reason of man, it has never been seriously affirmed that they stood upon an equal footing with him in the scale of intelligence; and the only reason alleged for this difference is, that the lower animals were guided by a principle which seemed to be purely and essentially mechanical; but that man, on the contrary, had the power of choice as a constituent part of his nature. We talk of animals being guided by instinct, by impulse, by the economy of their nature, which modes of expression simply imply that their movements and habits are at all times



under the influence of necessary connexion ; but we never think of conferring upon them (except for the purposes of poetical fiction) the attribute of intellectual responsibility. Man claims this attribute exclusively to himself ; and will not allow any of the myriads of beings which people this globe to participate in the honours which this distinctive qualification confers upon him.

## CHAPTER IX.

## GENERAL REMARKS UPON THE PRINCIPLES CONTAINED IN THE FOREGOING CHAPTERS.

---

FROM the analysis of our notions of intelligence and moral obligation which has been attempted in the preceding pages, we may readily perceive the great influence which our conceptions of voluntary agency exercise over our ideas of right and wrong, and of our mental constitution. Our notions of perfect moral freedom are so interwoven with the rudiments of responsibility, and with the very texture of the language we employ to express these notions, that we cannot advance a single step in the investigation of our moral nature, without meeting with the suggestions of liberty at every turn, and becoming impressed with a deep conviction that they are not illusory, chimerical, and fictitious, but are solid, substantial, and conclusive, and form an

important element in that class of phenomena which we denominate by the epithet of the moral world. The notion of moral freedom has all the characteristics of an original conception of the mind—a conception, however, which, though no set of words can fully and accurately define, yet no argumentative dexterity can darken or efface. Some philosophers may reason about the abstract nature of this conception ; may draw fine distinctions about its degrees of influence, or they may deny its existence altogether ; but the cobwebs of subtilty afford a frail barrier against an impulse of nature, and a powerful and general feeling is not to be rooted up or subdued by doubtful principles or logical refinements. The freedom of the will is the vivifying and animating principle of our moral and intellectual natures—the pabulum of rational intelligence—that living power which alone distinguishes man from a marble statue, or from the beasts that perish.

So indissolubly, indeed, are our ideas of moral freedom connected with our notions of moral accountableness, that we can form to ourselves no conception of a being who is entitled to our praise or blame, without investing him with the power of doing the *very contrary actions* to those which we

consider as good or evil, and which are calculated to call forth our moral approbation or censure. A being, without such a qualification, stands before us naked and lifeless—destitute of a single attribute of moral intelligence—but the moment we clothe him with freedom—the moment we suppose him to be possessed of the power of doing *of himself* the contraries to those actions required to be performed or avoided ;—we do from that time, as it were by the wand of a magician, make him a new creature ; place him under the influence of rewards and punishments ; and convert him, in fact, into what we understand and denominate by a moral agent, or responsible being. There is neither life, nor intelligence, nor wisdom, nor order, in the universe, where the voice of moral and intellectual freedom is not heard.

It cannot, however, be denied, (nor do the views I advocate require any such denial,) that our common and familiar language on moral and intellectual subjects is strongly tinged in its composition with necessity. We talk of being under a *binding obligation* to do this or that action ; that we *must* do certain deeds before we can obtain praise or incur censure, and that nothing appears to give such a complete security for the exercise of a virtuous

disposition, as when we talk of a person considering himself bound *by necessity* to act according to the dictates of moral obligation. But in all those instances where necessary connexion seems to be expressed or implied, it would aid us materially in forming just notions of the sources of moral approbation or disapprobation, were we to cast our eyes inwardly for a moment, and see what is really meant by such phrases as these: "We must of necessity act in this manner." "These were the reasons which compelled me to act as I have done." "I could not help doing what I have done." Now, it appears to me, in all these instances, it is not a *positive* or *absolute* necessity which is here implied, but a *relative* or *conditional* one. Whenever we make use of such language, it is always understood, both by others and ourselves, that we have no power within us of acting differently; that in no instance is it supposed that this power is ever subdued; and when we say we have not the power to do this action or that, we simply mean that we *can* perform *of ourselves* the prohibited action, but we *will not* perform it. I think every one will be convinced that the voluntary powers of the mind are not in such cases for a moment suspended, if he will only attend to his own consciousness, and not

be exclusively guided in his conclusions, by the literal meaning of the language he employs. Let us suppose that the moral and intellectual actions of a person are the consequences of an interminable series of causes and effects, and over these causes and effects he has not the slightest control; we then cease to consider him as a moral and intellectual being; and would no more think of conferring praise or blame upon him for any thing he might do towards ourselves or others, than we would think of eulogizing or condemning those inanimate objects, which, by the well known influence of physical causes, are sometimes instrumental in conferring both benefits and injuries upon us.

To so great a length, indeed, do we carry this repugnance to every thing like compulsory influence over our minds and moral powers, that a very striking fact may be noticed here, respecting our relation to the Deity, namely, that we conceive ourselves, to a certain extent, beyond even his direct or immediate power. Though reason and piety both impress upon us the truth that he is our creator, and the upholder of our existence; that in him we are truly said "to live, and move, and have our being;" and though we express our entire conviction of this truth in its abstract shape, almost every

moment of our lives, yet we do so only in a qualified and conditional manner. We are so constituted that we are obliged to place the whole man, to a limited degree, beyond the sphere of His immediate agency or control, in order that we may form to ourselves correct conceptions of the nature of our intellectual and moral faculties and our various duties, and of the justice of those rewards and punishments which are annexed to their performance or non-performance. We do not conceive that the Almighty is, in an absolute sense, the author of every individual thought, or every individual action we think or perform, nor do we conceive that it militates against either philosophical truth or strict piety, to say that we have mental and moral powers *within ourselves* to do, to a certain extent, whatever we please. The reason of this is obvious. It is this conception of mental and moral liberty which constitutes us rational creatures, and it is impossible for us to perceive the least shadow of moral obligation, if our every thought and action were referred to the Almighty's immediate power, or to any subordinate agents he might please to appoint.

The degree of influence which the divine Being exercises over us, has been one of the most fruitful sources of theological disputation. Many divines

have attributed all our good actions to the direct interposition of the Deity, but few, if any, have had the boldness to maintain, that our wicked actions might be traced to the same influence. The power of doing evil has, therefore, by common consent, been referred to the free-will of man, and on this account he has been exposed to its consequences. And in the multitude of books which have been written on this topic at various times, we universally find, that the popular or universal feeling of liberty has always been urged against the abstract principle of direct influence, and for this sole reason, that our moral responsibility was thought to be endangered by admitting a principle which had an *apparent*, if not a *real tendency* to represent us in the light of mere agents, or instruments in the hands of the divine Being.

The substance of the preceding remarks may be considered to have a direct bearing upon the general nature and conduct of the Deity, according to the plain and familiar notions we form of his divine nature. An infinite series of causes and effects is justly considered as destructive of the very nature or essence of intelligent and creative power. And why? Just because we cannot conceive any thing like intelligence and moral responsibility to follow



from the nature of necessary connexion. We go from one course to another, until we grow weary or exhausted with the inanimate and desolate nature of the journey, and we then stop short, and endow something or another with creative and self-contained power, and this principle or being, or whatever it may be termed, is all that men do, or can know, of an all-governing and providential nature, from the mere exercise of their own limited powers. We do not come to this conclusion in natural theology by mere reasoning ; there is not a particle of any thing which, according to the interpretation of ordinary language, can be called reason in it ; it is a suggestion of the mind alone, or rather, perhaps, it might be termed an expression of this position, that necessary connexion, considered *merely as necessary connexion*, is totally at variance with all notions of rational intelligences, whether divine or human. It is true we take this necessary connexion with us a certain length in our inquiries, but we soon cast it off, and press at once to the conclusion, that there must be some self-existent, self-moving cause of all things, and we clothe this supreme power with all intellectual and moral responsibility, just because we cannot make any progress in our investigations without it ; and be-

cause a necessary chain of causes and effects, *when viewed in itself*, can account for nothing, and every thing under its exclusive contemplation being dead and lifeless, presenting to the eye nothing but a barren and dreary wilderness, without a single point on which our intellectual vision can rest with pleasure or satisfaction. When, however, we take this principle of inventive power for granted, we have then a rallying point of infinite value and importance to man. Like the mountain on which the ark rested, after beating about in the dreary wastes of a universal ocean, the principle of divine intelligence affords a secure landing place for the human race, and gives rise to a new and better order of things; to a vast variety and succession of new exertions, of new hopes, and of new enjoyments.

We come to the knowledge of the human mind, and of moral responsibility or accountableness, by precisely the same process as we come to the knowledge of the divine nature and attributes. Here necessary connexion, considered in the abstract, can afford us no information nor satisfaction as to our own nature, duties, or expectations. An infinite series of causes and effects, relative to a man's intellectual and moral nature, is productive of just

the same effects, as an infinite series of physical causes and effects, when applied to the constitution of the universe. The mind shrinks from both with horror ; and to give itself ease—to loose itself from its trammels and difficulties, it does, in its consideration of mental and moral causes and effects; exactly the same thing as it does when it views the chain of physical causes and effects ; it creates within itself a self-moving, an intelligent, and accountable principle. We do at once take for granted that we are the real instruments of our own mental and moral actions, of an accountable description ; and the only reason we can advance for this is, that we cannot, were we ever so willing, place ourselves in opposition to our own constitution, and connect moral responsibility with an infinite series of mental and moral causes and effects. But the belief that we are the true and sole cause of our own actions, is not, it may be owned, susceptible of any thing like a logical demonstration ; but we take the thing for granted, just because we are obliged to do so on account of its being an object of intuitive belief.

The doctrine of a supreme and intelligent governor of the universe, is nothing more than the doctrine of divine free will ; it is only clothing the

last link in the chain of causes and effects with that attribute with which we invest our own mental and moral constitutions ; that we may be considered rational and accountable beings. Take away this notion of freedom in the divine nature, and you do with one blow annihilate the existence of Deity altogether. There is nothing left to satisfy or give pleasure to the mind. The asserter of liberty does no more in assuming his principle of free-will, than the believer in the existence of a Deity does when he assumes his principle of divine intelligence. The one discards the infinite series of mental and moral causes and effects, and the other, in like manner, renounces an infinite series of physical causes and effects, and both for the same reason, namely, the complete incompatibility of associating notions of intelligence and moral responsibility with the pure and naked principle of necessary connexion. The advocate of free-will, when he is taunted with reasoning upon principles which he cannot logically maintain, may console himself with the recollection that he does no more than every man does who acknowledges the existence of a divine and intelligent first cause, which called the universe into being ; and that the same arguments which are brought forward to impugn the doctrine of human freedom,

must, if consistency be preserved, and they be pushed to their utmost extent, go to destroy, root and branch, the fundamental articles of all natural and revealed religion.

I should wish, however, to guard myself here against a possible misapprehension of my meaning. It may be said that I make the doctrine of a divine nature depend upon a mere gratuitous assumption. I on no account mean this, in the ordinary acceptation of language; what I mean is, that the belief in a Deity arises from a natural suggestion of the human mind—a suggestion, the universality of which, amongst all the different races of men, many striking and conclusive manifestations might be furnished. I have always thought that those authors who have treated of the existence of a Deity, by endeavouring to prove the truth of this great doctrine, by a course of abstract reasoning, have been labouring under a great mistake, by conceiving that a principle, in a great measure intuitive, was susceptible of logical demonstration. The Almighty has not left himself without a witness. He has not left it to the exclusive province of the logician to demonstrate his being and attributes, but has imprinted His existence upon the hearts of all men; though in some, by faint and shadowy characters, yet so

universally perceptible, that a philosopher is fully warranted in considering His existence as founded upon an original suggestion of human nature.

There is even in idolatry itself, in all its forms and degrees, something conspicuously illustrative of that principle of our nature, immediately under consideration, by investing the various imaginary deities with the most perfect voluntary power, and in avoiding every thing which has the most distant appearance of even a limited or modified fatality. The workings of nature in the savage breast, furnish us with abundant evidence that necessary connexion affords to him no satisfactory solution of those few facts of a physical, mental, and moral character, which constitute the sum total of his knowledge ; but he gives life and vitality to the whole universe, by filling every department with the fanciful beings of his own imagination, clothed with the all-powerful attribute of perfect volition. The doctrine of necessity is not the doctrine of uncivilized man. The perfect theist takes into his view a wide range of causes and effects, and when his power of partial enumeration fails him, he assumes a self-existent, intelligent, and moral being, as the true and only cause of all things, and as the only means of satisfactorily accounting for those

events which fall under his notice ; but untutored man can scarcely connect two causes and effects together without calling in the assistance of a supernatural agency. The Deity of the rational theist is placed by him at the utmost boundaries of material and intellectual existence, and is endowed with infinite power and wisdom to create and uphold that order of things which He has chosen to make ; but to the savage, nature is divided into thousands of little principalities and powers, over each of which a being is placed, with whose nature and localities he conceives himself intimately acquainted, and who possesses, as an indispensable attribute or condition of his being, the power to do of himself whatever his fancied will or pleasure may dictate. Had it not been for this absolute power of free-agency with which the deities and idols of heathen nations are endowed, they would never have been created at all ; for the only immediate purpose to which they are generally applied, is that of resolving the various phenomena of nature, which fall under their observation, into the will or desire of these imaginary objects of adoration.

But leaving these remarks upon rational and idolatrous worship, which might be considerably extended, let us notice a common objection urged

by necessarians against the system of human freedom, namely, that it is a *moral* necessity they contend for, and not a *physical* one. Now, in my humble opinion, this objection amounts to nothing; or rather it ought to be termed a distinction without a difference. Our idea of necessary connexion is a simple, uncompound, unalterable, and undefinable idea, an idea which may change from object to object, but which never assumes any other appearance to the mind, so to speak, but one. This idea, or notion, may be connected with material objects, with moral objects, or with mental objects, but this idea, notion, conception, thought, or by whatever name it may be called, of necessary connexion, maintains the same fixed and unchangeable character. What is, or can be meant by moral necessity? If it mean any thing, it must mean that moral objects are connected or bound together by a principle of connexion as indissoluble and fixed as that which we conceive links together the causes and effects in the material universe. I here call this necessary connexion, or principle of causation, a notion or conception; I only do so in a qualified sense, and in conformity with the established rules of language. This notion or thought ought to be termed an object of belief only; for it is like



many other simple elements of mind, more an object of faith than an object of perception; using the word perception in the same sense we usually do when we speak of *perceiving* the primary or secondary qualities of matter. In material objects we do not see the connecting principle—the *vinculum*, as it is termed, which links causes and effects together; all that we know of physical causation is, that one thing precedes another in a regular order of sequence, and we in the usual way of thinking and speaking give the name of cause to that event which precedes, and the name of effect to that event which follows in the order of time. I see one body strike another, and I perceive that motion follows; but I do not pretend to see that necessary principle of connexion which binds this cause and effect together; though the belief in the existence of such a principle of connexion is as firmly rivetted in my mind as any thing can possibly be. I talk about it, and act upon it, yet it cannot, without a forced construction, be said to be an object of my perception.

Now in precisely the same way do we think and reason on moral objects. I see a man follow a certain line of conduct, and I see poverty, misery, and distress of mind follow that conduct. I see

not the principle of connexion between the moral cause and the moral effect ; but my belief in that connexion is just as firmly established in my mind, as any physical connexion can possibly be. Now let any man attend to what passes in his own mind in such respective occasions as we have just mentioned, and see what difference he can conceive between the connexion which subsists among material objects and that which exists amongst objects of a moral kind ? I feel confident he will, on a moment's consideration, find that he can conceive no difference at all. The same thing holds good in our intellectual nature. We know that a certain idea, or train of ideas, will invariably recal to the mind another idea or train of ideas ; but we do not see here that principle which binds the two ideas or separate portions of thought together. The necessary connexion which subsists amongst material, moral, and mental objects, is, as far as we can perceive from an appeal to our own consciousness, precisely the same. This connexion may arise from various objects or events, but it preserves its identity throughout every change, and is always the same simple undivided element of our thought and belief. Let the matter be viewed in whatever light it may, there is not the slightest

foundation for this distinction between moral and material necessity, so far as the abstract principle of connexion is concerned ; and as to this essential distinction being calculated to ease the necessarian from his difficulties, it will be found to do so only by enabling him to slide away from the real question in dispute, and to shelter himself under the thin garb of verbal equivocation.

## CHAPTER X.

## A FEW THEORETICAL REMARKS—CONCLUSION.

---

I WILL here make a few remarks on the nature of moral action generally, and these may illustrate a little more clearly my own notions of free-will—at the same time, I wish these remarks to be considered as *purely theoretical*, and as having only a remote, not immediate or necessary connexion with what is advanced elsewhere in this work.

To lay down the principle at the outset I wish to illustrate, I may be allowed to observe, that there are, in my opinion, two different powers which influence human action, one is the will, or the faculty of volition, and the other power, so far as I know, has no particular name, but may be comprehended under what Dr. Hartley calls mechanical philosophy,

and which I shall take the liberty of calling mechanical power. It will be necessary for the right understanding of what has to follow, to observe, that I suppose these two powers quite different in their natures and independent in their operations. The power of the will always remains the same, and does not gradually assume the nature and appearances of mechanical power, or automatic motion, as the advocates of Hartley affirm. This is an important distinction, which is necessary to be kept in view, and which renders what I have to observe on this subject very different, both in form and in principle, from what goes under the general denomination of the Hartleian theory.

It may be observed, that Mr. Dugald Stewart, in his criticisms on the mechanical philosophy of Dr. Hartley, endeavours to show that all those powers which are exercised over different parts of the body, and which are generally denominated voluntary ones, always remain such. There is a good deal of plausibility in Mr. Stewart's reasonings, but they do not prove to the full extent the truth of the principles he wishes to establish. According to the views of Dr. Hartley, there is no such thing as will or voluntary power. It is true he does not hesitate to use these terms in his spe-

culations, but then they are considered by him and his disciples as figures of speech only, and do not stand for any thing having a distinct or permanent existence. It must be fully apparent to every reader of the vibratory or automatic philosophy, that the only difficulty which its disciples labour under, is to show how all our voluntary motions gradually assume the nature and appearances of mechanical agency. This is the point they always wish to establish. The Doctor says that voluntary powers are voluntary powers only in name. Now Mr. Stewart takes the opposite side of the argument, and wishes to maintain that there is nothing mechanical in what is generally attributed to the operations of habit, but that whatever series of bodily actions take their source from the will, the will continues to exercise a constant and exclusive influence over these actions as long as they exist. His remarks upon this subject are too long for quoting here, but the position he wishes to establish, and which is fairly deducible from his principles, is, that no power of a mechanical nature influences our intellectual and moral faculties. Both these philosophers are in the wrong; and the truth, I apprehend, may be found by steering a middle course. It is clear from ob-

ervation, that some parts of our bodily frames are under the influence of the will, but that this influence is by no means general or complete. The power of the will, for example, over the secretory organs of the body, is well known ; yet this power can only be carried to a certain point, beyond which it is not felt or perceived, and we become real involuntary agents. Now this fact involves a difficulty similar to that which Mr. Stewart urges against the mechanical philosophy of Dr. Hartley. The influence of the will over these organs is considerable, and must have been observed by every individual, yet this influence is felt only to a certain degree, and beyond that degree the exercise of the different functions must be carried on by some secret power or agency, with which we shall probably remain for ever unacquainted, and which may as well be called mechanical as any thing else. Again, when a person is trembling with cold, and if the cold be not very severe, he has it in his power to lessen, and even, in some cases, to stop the trembling altogether, by a vigorous and steady effort of his will. But when the cold is severe, and the trembling in consequence great, the influence of the will is completely nugatory, and the trembling continues until the faculties of the body

become powerless, or heat be communicated to the frame by some natural or artificial means.

Now it cannot possibly be maintained that the influence of the will is constant and complete in all these cases, but that, from the rapidity of the bodily motions, we are not able to perceive it. We have all the reason the nature of the thing will admit of, to suppose that those bodily movements and functions are carried on by two different kinds of powers. And what is this power which is different from the will? What is it that takes, in certain states of our bodies, all self-control out of our power, and makes us mere machines? May it not as well be called mechanical as by any other name?

The exercise of the will over our moral powers has something extremely analogous in it to its influence over the organs of the body. It is not only acknowledged by all moralists, but inferred by the plainest dictates of common sense, that the passions are, to a certain degree, removed from any direct influence of the will, and may generally be considered in the light of blind impulses, undoubtedly urging the agent on towards a given end or object, but without allowing any time for reflection, or for bringing into active operation the powers of the



will. Observation clearly teaches us that there is as great a diversity amongst the passions of the mind as amongst the organs of the body. Some being more directly open to the influence of the will, and more under its sway and authority than others—he may also distinctly perceive that all the passions, like the organs of the body when excited to action, are more easily counteracted at their commencement than when allowed to run a certain course. How often do we find that when our passions are moderately indulged, we have them, in some measure, under our command, but when they are allowed a certain scope of indulgence, they become quite unmanageable, and hurry us on in our passionate career, not only without any assistance of the will, but in complete defiance of its power and authority. Hence it becomes an important branch of moral discipline to inculcate the necessity of checking our passions at the beginning, before they have been allowed to gain strength by exercise, and we fall easy victims to their despotic fury.

When we throw our eyes leisurely over the extensive field of human character, we instantly perceive that the conduct of men in this universe in which he is placed, presents appearances sufficient-

ly regular and uniform, and that there is reasonable ground for classifying his motives to action, and subjecting his conduct to general rules and principles. This is the origin of all these speculative maxims and systems which, when embodied into actual practice, embrace all the principles of civil policy, or the obligations he owes to mankind in general, or to the society to which he more immediately belongs; and also of that portion of moral philosophy which appertains to the preservation of his own individual existence, security, and comfort. But in proportion as we become less general in our remarks, dive more into detail, and give our inquiries more individuality and minuteness, the uniformity and general appearances of human character become more evanescent and imperceptible; and we may clearly perceive a considerable diversity of conduct and temper amongst the throng of the world, and that each man is distinguished from his neighbour by slight, though clearly defined, shades of moral character and behaviour. It is this almost total absence of generalizing, and that close and accurate attention to individual character, which give that tact and useful portion of knowledge to what are termed *men of the world*; and which, in a great measure, lay

the foundation for history, poetry, the dramatic art, and those light and sprightly delineations of human passions and character, which form the great mass of the current literature of every country, and which productions take their rise more from capricious and incidental circumstances, resulting from different manners, fashions, and customs, than from the more comprehensive and abstract principles of human nature.

The moral differences of temper and conduct amongst mankind may therefore be safely taken as an indisputable fact; and these differences are of such a nature as to induce one to consider them as purely constitutional. No person who has paid attention to his own children, or marked with care the development of the moral powers in the children of others, but must have frequently noticed great differences of temper and disposition amongst them; and these peculiarities are frequently so striking, that we are sometimes enabled, with tolerable accuracy, to foretel the predominating moral bias the child will exhibit when he arrives at manhood. The only thing which remains for us to perform, is to endeavour to account for these differences, and to reduce that multitude of individual and insulated

moral facts to some adequate cause or general principle.

The principle I would wish to lay down is, that all the moral differences amongst mankind may be attributed to the different degrees of strength of their *wills* or *voluntary powers*. Whenever we perceive a man who knows right from wrong, deviating in his conduct from the standard of moral obligation, the power of the will in that individual is too weak, and the mechanical influence too strong, either from some organic defect, bad cultivation, or misdirection of the former power. We frequently meet with people in society who lament in earnest and pathetic terms, their total inability to live up to the common standard of worldly morality; not from any secret dislike to practise the duties and obligations of life, but from a consciousness that they have not the power of doing otherwise. They hesitate, have no firmness, and when two different lines of conduct lie before them, they reluctantly, as it were, prefer the ways of wickedness to those of virtue and prudence. In some individuals the power of the will is so very feeble, that mankind conceive them to be purely involuntary agents under the direct influence of some invisible power,

which, for want of a better name, they denominate by the epithets infatuation and fatality.

That the differences of moral constitutions arise from the original or acquired strength of the will, is not, I apprehend, a new doctrine ; for it has made its appearance under different appellations. The various physical temperaments of the physician will be found to be, so far as they relate to our tempers and dispositions, descriptive of the different degrees in which people possess voluntary power or self-control. Those who maintain this doctrine of temperaments, (and there are not many who reject it), tell us, that certain bodily conformations are connected with certain moral dispositions or habits, and that some men have by nature a stronger power within themselves to regulate and guide their appetites and passions than others. The truth of this position is fully established by observation. We find some persons so irregularly constituted, so to speak, exhibiting such a disproportion between the strength of their passions and appetites, and the power of their wills, that their whole lives present nothing but a scene of disorder and confusion ; and such a close and intimate union does there seem to exist between the body and the moral principle, that if a certain temperament be stated to us, we

are able, in nine cases out of ten, to give a pretty correct outline of the prevailing moral bias which will be connected with that temperament. Doubtless the original moral constitution, as well as the bodily, may be greatly altered by education, and the peculiar circumstances of life in which the individual is placed ; but this will not alter the nature or force of the general principle. It may also be remarked here, that the various theories and observations we meet with in medical writers respecting the nature and mode of operation of the nervous system, will be found to be grounded upon the different proportions which subsist between the passions and appetites, and the will, in various individuals.

I do not by any means think that there is any additional difficulty thrown in the way of accounting for the phenomena of human nature by the supposition of two independent principles or powers of action. One general kind of notion is, in its abstract nature, just as unaccountable as twenty different kinds can be. Nor can there be any reasonable objection urged against men's possessing spontaneous motion, in the absolute sense of the term ; seeing that the *necessary* motion, which is implied in the contrary hypothesis, is equally as far removed

from our observation and scrutiny. Archbishop King remarks on this subject. "But to confess the truth, 'tis no less difficult to conceive a thing to be moved or determined by another than by itself; but as we are accustomed to material agents, all which are passive in their operations, we are certain of the fact, and not at all solicitous about the manner of it; whereas if we consider the thing thoroughly, we shall find ourselves as far from apprehending how motion is communicated from one body to another, as how the will can move itself; but there seems to be nothing wonderful in the one, because it is observed to happen at all times, and in every action; whereas the other is looked upon as incredible, since it is seldom performed, viz. by the will alone. And though both reason and experience prove it is done, yet we suspect ourselves to be imposed upon, because we know not the manner of it."\*

If the principle be granted that the Deity possesses complete and perfect freedom in all his actions, (and I think it has been shown by the preceding remarks that the contrary position is full of error and danger,) then I am of opinion that it

\* Origin of Evil, p. 190.

would tend in some measure to enable us to frame a theory to account for the moral differences among mankind, if we were to assume it probable that the Almighty had given unto man a complete but limited freedom of moral action ; and according to the different measure or degree in which this freedom of the will is imparted, or the proportion it bears in original strength to the other mechanical principles of our nature, will be the peculiar moral complexion of his character. I am aware that the phrase *complete but limited freedom*, is liable to objection, but this arises principally from the imperfections in language. What I mean by the words is, that I can suppose man to be endowed with a certain portion of bodily, intellectual, and moral liberty ; but when viewed beyond the sphere of his freedom, appears a necessary and dependent creature. I can suppose him to walk in a certain manner and to a certain length, to think of certain things, and to perform certain actions, just when and how he pleases or *wills* ; but that he is prevented, from the stern necessity of his condition, from flying in the air, or removing mountains by his own individual and unassisted strength. These few explanatory remarks will enable my readers, I hope, to form a



conception of what I mean by the phrase, *complete but limited freedom*.

If men are possessed at all of any thing which we denominate uniformly by the terms free-will or liberty, then I do not conceive there is any thing extravagant in supposing this power, like his other powers, may be imparted to him, in various degrees, and may act as a counteracting principle of variable intensity upon the other powers of his nature. Some men are born with more physical strength, and a greater portion of beauty and symmetry of shape than others; and there is also a striking and marked original difference in their mental powers and capacities. This inequality in the principle which we suppose does create the great moral differences amongst the species, would only be in accordance with the whole economy of nature; for there is not, perhaps, in the whole range of animated creation, two individual creatures that are precisely the same in all their shapes, capacities, instincts, and powers. The same remark is applicable to men.

To suppose some principle which also creates in our moral constitution an individual inequality, does not, in my opinion, savour of any thing which

can be characterised as extravagant. The inequality amongst moral natures, is a fact which forces itself upon the observation of the most careless and unreflecting ; but the only question is, what is it which creates this difference ? I would say it is the inequality in the strength of the will, or voluntary power, which, of course, is liable to be materially affected by our various circumstances in life, and different modes of moral education.

But, without pursuing these speculations further, I beg to conclude with observing, that whether these suggestions be feasible or not, they do not by any means form a necessary part in the establishing of my original position, that our praise and blame of moral or immoral actions, are greatly influenced and regulated by our conceptions of the free-will of the agent. This has, I think, been shown in the preceding pages. But I am fully aware this opinion may be liable to objection, for theories on human nature will ever be liable to a difference of opinion and sentiment. It is, however, the duty of every one to promulgate and believe in that which, though not out of the reach of difficulties and disputes, does, in his opinion, appear the least objectionable, and which seems to harmonize with those general and important principles, which are

acknowledged by all parties to exercise a uniform and extensive influence over our conduct and sentiments, at every period, and in every situation of our lives.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

- Page 72, line 1, for "*as to*," read "*or*"  
— 72, line 14, for "*constituted*," read "*constitutes*"  
— 75, line 16, for "*either*," read "*other*"  
— 93, line 6 from bottom, for "*in*," read "*on*"  
— 171, line 21, for "*man*," read "*men*."  
— 196, line 17, for "*no*," read "*a*."

orn  
and  
ion







THE BORROWER WILL BE CHARGED  
AN OVERDUE FEE IF THIS BOOK IS NOT  
RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY ON OR  
BEFORE THE LAST DATE STAMPED  
BELOW. NON-RECEIPT OF OVERDUE  
NOTICES DOES NOT EXEMPT THE  
BORROWER FROM OVERDUE FEES.

WIDENER  
BOOK DUE  
DEC 23 1981  
CANCELLED  
7290658  
DEC 19 1981



Phil 8876.18  
An essay shewing the intimate conne  
Widener Library 002262173



3 2044 084 660 083